

O what a silly fellow is a bashful young lover!

He was no sooner out of hearing, as we thought, than we both burst into a violent laugh. 'Well,' says Mrs Jervis, 'I never saw anything better acted than your part: but I wish you may not have discouraged him from any future attempt; especially since his passions are so cool, that you could prevent his hands going further than your bosom.' 'Hang him,' answered I, 'he is not quite so cold as that, I assure you; our hands, on neither side, were idle in the scuffle, nor have left us any doubt of each other as to that matter.' . . .

1741

From JOSEPH ANDREWS⁺

CHAPTER 12 [Good Neighbours]

Containing many surprising Adventures, which Joseph Andrews met with on the Road, scarce credible to those who have never travelled in a Stage-Coach.

Nothing remarkable happened on the road, 'till their arrival at the inn, to which the horses were ordered; whither they came about two in the morning. The moon then shone very bright, and Joseph making his friend a present of a pint of wine, and thanking him for the favour of his horse, notwithstanding all entreaties to the contrary, proceeded on his journey on foot.

He had not gone above two miles, charmed with the hopes of shortly seeing his beloved Fanny, when he was met by two fellows in a narrow lane, and ordered to stand and deliver. He readily gave them all the money he had, which was somewhat less than two pounds; and told them he hoped they would be so generous as to return him a few shillings, to defray his charges on his way home.

One of the ruffians answered with an oath, 'Yes, we'll give you something presently: but first strip and be d - n'd to you.' - 'Strip', cried the other, 'or I'll blow your brains to the Devil.' Joseph, remembering that he had borrowed his coat and breeches of a friend;

⁺*Joseph Andrews* The novel begins as the story of 'Pamela's brother', who is cast out of the domestic service of Lady Booby for rejecting her lustful advances (the situation parodies that in Richardson's novel). Joseph sets out

from London for Somerset, to find his true love, Fanny. The extract shows the antithesis of *Pamela* in its external narrator's clear control of its styles; the economy and irony owe much to Swift

and that he should be ashamed of making any excuse for not returning them, replied, he hoped they would not insist on his clothes, which were not worth much; but consider the coldness of the night. 'You are cold, are you, you rascal!' says one of the robbers, 'I'll warm you with a vengeance;' and damning his eyes, snapped a pistol at his head: which he had no sooner done, than the other levelled a blow at him with his stick, which Joseph, who was expert at cudgel-playing, caught with his, and returned the favour so successfully on his adversary, that he laid him sprawling at his feet, and at the same instant received a blow from behind, with the butt-end of a pistol from the other villain, which felled him to the ground, and totally deprived him of his senses.

The thief who had been knocked down had now recovered himself; and both together fell to be-labouring poor Joseph with their sticks, till they were convinced they had put an end to his miserable being: they then stripped him entirely naked, threw him into a ditch, and departed with their booty.

The poor wretch, who lay motionless a long time, just began to recover his senses as a stage-coach came by. The postilion[†] hearing a man's groans, stopped his horses, and told the coachman, 'he was certain there was a *dead* man lying in the ditch, for he heard him groan.'

'Go on, sirrah,' says the coachman, 'we are confounded late, and have no time to look after dead men.' A lady, who heard what the postilion said, and likewise heard the groan, called eagerly to the coachman, 'to stop and see what was the matter.' Upon which he bid the postilion 'alight, and look into the ditch.' He did so, and returned, 'that there was a man sitting upright as naked as ever he was born,' - 'O J-sus,' cried the lady, 'A naked man! Dear coachman, drive on and leave him.'

Upon this the gentlemen got out of the coach; and Joseph begged them, 'to have mercy upon him: for that he had been robbed, and almost beaten to death.' 'Robbed,' cries an old gentleman; 'let us make all the haste imaginable, or we shall be robbed too.' A young man, who belonged to the law, answered, 'he wished they had passed by without taking any notice: but that now they might be proved to have been *last* in *his company*; if he should die, they might be called to some account for his murder. He therefore thought it advisable to save the poor creature's life, for their own sakes, if possible; at least, if he died, to prevent the jury's finding *that they fled[†] for it*. He was therefore of *opinion*, to take the man into the coach, and carry him to the next inn.'

The lady insisted, 'that he should not come into the coach. That if they lifted him in, she would herself alight: for she had rather stay in that

[†]*postilion* riding on one of the horses
[†]*fled* flight from the scene could result in punishment

place to all eternity, than ride with a naked man.' The coachman objected, 'that he could not suffer him to be taken in, unless some body would pay a shilling for his carriage the four miles.' Which the two gentlemen refused to do; but the lawyer, who was afraid of some mischief happening to himself if the wretch was left behind in that condition, saying, 'no man could be too cautious in these matters, and that he remembered very extraordinary cases in the books,' threatened the coachman, and bid him deny taking him up at his peril; 'for that if he died, he should be indicted for his murder, and if he lived, and brought an action against him, he would willingly take a brief in it.' These words had a sensible effect on the coachman, who was well acquainted with the person who spoke them; and the old gentleman above-mentioned, thinking the naked man would afford him frequent opportunities of showing his wit to the lady, offered to join with the company in giving a mug of beer for his fare; till partly alarmed by the threats of the one, and partly by the promises of the other, and being perhaps a *little* moved with compassion at the poor creature's condition, who stood bleeding and shivering with the cold, he at length agreed; and Joseph was now advancing to the coach, where seeing the lady, who held the sticks of her fan before her eyes, he absolutely refused, miserable as he was, to enter, unless he was furnished with sufficient coverings, to prevent giving the least offence to decency. So perfectly modest was this young man; such mighty effects had the spotless example of the amiable Pamela, and the excellent sermons of Mr Adams wrought upon him.

Though there were several great coats about the coach, it was not easy to get over this difficulty which Joseph had started. The two gentlemen complained they were cold, and could not spare a rag; the man of wit saying, with a laugh, *that charity began at home*; and the coachman, who had two great coats spread under him, refused to lend either, lest they should be made bloody; the lady's footman desired to be excused for the same reason, which the lady herself, notwithstanding her abhorrence of a naked man, approved: and it is more than probable, poor Joseph who obstinately adhered to his modest resolution, must have perished, unless the postilion (a lad who hath been since transported[†] for robbing a hen-roost) had voluntarily stripped off a great coat, his only garment, at the same time swearing a great oath (for which he was rebuked by the passengers) 'that he would rather ride in his shirt all his life, than suffer a fellow-creature to lie in so miserable a condition.'

Joseph, having put on the great coat, was lifted into the coach, which now proceeded on its journey. He declared himself almost dead with the cold, which gave the man of wit an occasion to ask the lady, if she

could not accommodate him with a dram. She answered with some resentment, 'she wondered at his asking her such a question;' but assured him, 'she never tasted any such thing.'

The lawyer was enquiring into the circumstances of the robbery, when the coach stopped, and one of the ruffians, putting a pistol in, demanded their money of the passengers; who readily gave it them; and the lady, in her fright, delivered up a little silver bottle, of about a half-pint size, which the rogue clapping it to his mouth, and drinking her health, declared held some of the best nantes[†] he had ever tasted: this the lady afterwards assured the company was the mistake of her maid, for that she had ordered her to fill the bottle with Hungary water.[†]

As soon as the fellows were departed, the lawyer, who had, it seems, a case of pistols in the seat of the coach, informed the company, that if it had been day-light, and he could have come at his pistols, he would not have submitted to the robbery; he likewise set forth, that he had often met highwaymen when he travelled on horseback, but none ever durst attack him; concluding, that if he had not been more afraid for the lady than for himself, he should not have now parted with his money so easily.

As wit is generally observed to love to reside in empty pockets, so the gentleman, whose ingenuity we have above remarked, as soon as he had parted with his money, began to grow wonderfully facetious. He made frequent allusions to Adam and Eve, and said many excellent things on figs and figleaves; which perhaps gave more offence to Joseph than to any other in the company.

The lawyer likewise made several very pretty jests, without departing from his profession. He said, 'if Joseph and the lady were alone, he would be the more capable of making a *conveyance*[†] to her, as his *affairs* were not *fettered* with any *incumbrance*; he'd warrant, he soon suffered a *recovery* by a writ of *entry*, which was the proper way to create *heirs in tail*; that for his own part, he would engage to make so *firm a settlement* in a coach, that there should be no danger of an *ejectment*;[†] with an inundation of the like gibberish, which he continued to vent till the coach arrived at an inn, where one servant-maid only was up in readiness to attend the coachman, and furnish him with cold meat and a dram. Joseph desired to alight, and that he might have a bed prepared for him, which the maid readily promised to perform; and being a good-natured wench, and not so squeamish as the lady had been, she clapped a large faggot on the fire, and furnishing Joseph with a great coat belonging to one of the hostlers, desired him to sit down

[†]transported to a penal colony

nantes brandy
Hungary water medicinal flower-water

[†]conveyance . . . ejectment legal terms, here
with sexual innuendo

140 and warm himself, whilst she made his bed. The coachman, in the mean time, took an opportunity to call up a surgeon, who lived within a few doors: after which, he reminded his passengers how late they were, and after they had taken leave of Joseph, hurried them off as fast as he could.

145 The wench soon got Joseph to bed, and promised to use her interest to borrow him a shirt; but imagined, as she afterwards said, by his being so bloody, that he must be a dead man: she ran with all speed to hasten the surgeon, who was more than half dressed, apprehending that the coach had been overturned and some gentleman or lady hurt. As soon as the wench had informed him at his window, that it was a poor foot passenger who had been stripped of all he had, and almost murdered, he chid her for disturbing him so early, slipped off his clothes again, and very quietly returned to bed and to sleep.

155 Aurora¹ now began to show her blooming cheeks over the hills, whilst ten millions of feathered songsters, in jocund chorus, repeated odes² a thousand times sweeter than those of our Laureate, and sung both *the day and the song*; when the master of the inn, Mr Tow-wouse, arose, and learning from his maid an account of the robbery, and the situation of his poor naked guest, he shook his head, and cried, 'Good-lack-a-day!' and then ordered the girl to carry him one of his own shirts.

Mrs Tow-wouse was just awake, and had stretched out her arms in vain to fold her departed husband, when the maid entered the room. 'Who's there? Betty?' 'Yes madam.' 'Where's your master?' 'He's without, madam; he hath sent me for a shirt to lend to a poor naked man, who hath been robbed and murdered.' 'Touch one, if you dare, you slut,' said Mrs Tow-wouse, 'your master is a pretty sort of a man to take in naked vagabonds, and clothe them with his own clothes. I shall have no such doings. — If you offer to touch any thing, I will throw the chamber-pot at your head. Go, send your master to me.' 'Yes madam,' answered Betty. As soon as he came in, she thus began: 'What the Devil do you mean by this, Mr Tow-wouse? Am I to buy shirts to lend to a set of scabby rascals?' 'My dear,' said Mr Tow-wouse, 'this is a poor wretch.' 'Yes,' says she, 'I know it is a poor wretch, but what the Devil have we to do with poor wretches? The law makes us provide for too many already. We shall have thirty or forty poor wretches in red coats³ shortly.' 'My dear,' cries Tow-wouse, 'this man hath been robbed of all he hath.' 'Well then,' says she, 'where's his money to pay

Aurora goddess of dawn
odes official productions by the Poet Laureate,
Colley Cibber. F. echoes his own recent
parody

red coats

soldiers billeted on them

180 his reckoning? Why doth not such a fellow go to an ale-house? I shall send him packing as soon as I am up, I assure you.' 'My dear,' said he, 'common charity won't suffer you to do that.' 'Common charity, a f — t!' says she, 'common charity teaches us to provide for ourselves, and our families; and I and mine won't be ruined by your charity, I assure you.' 'Well,' says he, 'my dear, do as you will when you are up, you know I never contradict you.' 'No,' says she, 'if the Devil was to contradict me, I would make the house too hot to hold him.'

185 With such like discourses they consumed near half an hour, whilst Betty provided a shirt from the hostler, who was one of her sweethearts, and put it on poor Joseph. The surgeon had likewise at last visited him, had washed and dressed his wounds, and was now come to acquaint Mr Tow-wouse, that his guest was in such extreme danger of his life, that he scarce saw any hopes of his recovery. — 'Here's a pretty kettle of fish,' cries Mrs Tow-wouse, 'you have brought upon us! We are like to have a funeral at our own expense.' Tow-wouse (who notwithstanding his charity, would have given his vote as freely as he ever did at an election, that any other house in the kingdom, should have had quiet possession of his guest) answered, 'My dear, I am not to blame: he was brought hither by the stage-coach; and Betty had put him to bed before I was stirring.' 'I'll Betty her,' says she — At which, with half her garments on, the other half under her arm, she sallied out in quest of the unfortunate Betty, whilst Tow-wouse and the surgeon went to pay a visit to poor Joseph, and enquire into the circumstance of this melancholy affair.

From TOM JONES[†]BOOK V, CHAPTER X [*Caught in the Act*]

Shewing the Truth of many Observations of Ovid, and of other more grave Writers, who have proved, beyond Contradiction, that Wine is often the Fore-runner of Incontinency.

Jones retired from the company, in which we have seen him engaged, into the fields, where he intended to cool himself by a walk in the open air, before he attended Mr Allworthy. There, whilst he renewed those meditations on his dear Sophia, which the dangerous illness of his friend and benefactor had for some time interrupted, an accident happened, which with sorrow we relate, and with sorrow, doubtless, will it be read; however, that historic truth to which we profess so inviolable an attachment, obliges us to communicate it to posterity.

It was now a pleasant evening in the latter end of June, when our hero was walking in a most delicious grove, where the gentle breezes fanning the leaves, together with the sweet trilling of a murmuring stream, and the melodious notes of nightingales formed all together the most enchanting harmony. In this scene, so sweetly accommodated to love, he meditated on his dear Sophia. While his wanton fancy roved unbounded over all her beauties, and his lively imagination painted the charming maid in various ravishing forms, his warm heart melted with tenderness, and at length throwing himself on the ground by the side of a gently murmuring brook, he broke forth into the following ejaculation.

‘O Sophia, would heaven give thee to my arms, how blest would be my condition! Curst be that fortune which sets a distance between us. Was I but possessed of thee, one only suit of rags thy whole estate, is there a man on earth whom I would envy! How contemptible would the brightest Circassian[†] beauty, dressed in all the jewels of the Indies, appear to my eyes! But why do I mention another woman? could I think my eyes capable of looking at any other with tenderness, these hands should tear them from my head. No, my Sophia, if cruel fortune separates us for ever, my soul shall dote on thee alone. The chastest constancy will I ever preserve to thy image. Though I should never have possession of thy charming person, still shalt thou alone have possession of my thoughts, my love, my soul. Oh! my fond heart is so wrapped in

[†]Tom Jones. Tom Jones, a founding brought up by Squire Allworthy, is a warm-blooded lad; Bliffl, his calculating half-brother;

Thwackum, a clergyman. Tom is attracted by Molly, but loves Sophia, daughter of Squire Western

that tender bosom, that the brightest beauties would for me have no charms, nor would a hermit be colder in their embraces. Sophia, Sophia alone shall be mine. What raptures are in that name! I will engrave it on every tree.’

At these words he started up, and beheld – not his Sophia – no, nor a Circassian[†] maid richly and elegantly attired for the Grand Signior’s seraglio.[†] No; without a gown, in a shift that was somewhat of the coarsest, and none of the cleanest, bedewed likewise with some odoriferous effluvia, the produce of the day’s labour, with a pitch-fork in her hand, Molly Seagrim approached. Our hero had his pen-knife in his hand, which he had drawn for the before-mentioned purpose, of carving on the bark; when the girl coming near him cried out with a smile, ‘You don’t intend to kill me, Squire, I hope!’ ‘Why should you think I would kill you?’ answered Jones. ‘Nay,’ replied she, ‘after your cruel usage of me when I saw you last, killing me would, perhaps, be too great kindness for me to expect.’

Here ensued a parley, which, as I do not think myself obliged to relate it, I shall omit. It is sufficient that it lasted a full quarter of an hour, at the conclusion of which they retired into the thickest part of the grove.

Some of my readers may be inclined to think this event unnatural. However, the fact is true; and, perhaps, may be sufficiently accounted for, by suggesting that Jones probably thought one woman better than none, and Molly as probably imagined two men to be better than one. Besides the before-mentioned motive assigned to the present behaviour of Jones, the reader will be likewise pleased to recollect in his favour, that he was not at this time perfect master of that wonderful power of reason, which so well enables grave and wise men to subdue their unruly passions, and to decline any of these prohibited amusements.

Wine now had totally subdued this power in Jones. He was, indeed, in a condition, in which if reason had interposed, though only to advise, she might have received the answer which one Cleostratus gave many years ago to a silly fellow who asked him if he was not ashamed to be drunk? ‘Are not you,’ said Cleostratus, ‘ashamed to admonish a drunken man?’ – To say the truth, in a court of justice, drunkenness must not be an excuse, yet in a court of conscience it is greatly so; and therefore Aristotle, who commends the laws of Pittacus, by which drunken men received double punishment for their crimes, allows there is more of policy than justice in that law. Now, if there are any transgressions pardonable from drunkenness, they are certainly such as Mr Jones was at present guilty of; on which head I could pour forth a vast profusion of learning, if I imagined it would either entertain my reader, or teach him any thing more than he knows already. For his sake, therefore, I

Circassian handsome inhabitant of Caucasus seraglio harem

shall keep my learning to myself, and return to my history.

It hath been observed, that fortune seldom doth things by halves. To say truth, there is no end to her freaks whenever she is disposed to gratify or displease. No sooner had our hero retired with his Dido, but

Speluncam Blifl, Dux et Divinus eandem

Deveniunt.[†] [Blifl and the parson come to the same cave]

the parson and the young squire, who were taking a serious walk, arrived at the stile which leads into the grove, and the latter caught a view of the lovers, just as they were sinking out of sight.

Blifl knew Jones very well, though he was at above a hundred yards distance, and he was as positive to the sex of his companion, though not to the individual person. He started; blessed himself, and uttered a very solemn ejaculation.

Thwackum expressed some surprise at these sudden emotions, and asked the reason of them. To which Blifl answered, 'he was certain he had seen a fellow and wench retire together among the bushes, which he doubted not was with some wicked purpose.' As to the name of Jones he thought proper to conceal it, and why he did so must be left to the judgment of the sagacious reader: for we never choose to assign motives to the actions of men, when there is any possibility of our being mistaken.

The parson, who was not only strictly chaste in his own person, but a great enemy to the opposite vice in all others, fired at this information. He desired Mr Blifl to conduct him immediately to the place, which as he approached, he breathed forth vengeance mixed with lamentations; nor did he refrain from casting some oblique reflections on Mr Allworthy, insinuating that the wickedness of the country was principally owing to the encouragement he had given to vice, by having exerted such kindness to a bastard, and by having mitigated that just and wholesome rigour of the law, which allots a very severe punishment to loose wenches.

The way, through which our hunters were to pass in pursuit of their game, was so beset with briars, that it greatly obstructed their walk, and caused, besides, such a rustling that Jones had sufficient warning of their arrival, before they could surprise him; nay, indeed, so incapable was Thwackum of concealing his indignation, and such vengeance did he mutter forth every step he took, that this alone must have abundantly satisfied Jones, that he was (to use the language of sportsmen) *found sitting*.

Speluncam . . . *Deveniunt* parodies Virgil on the love of Dido and Aeneas (*Aeneid*, IV)

CHAPTER XI

In which a Simile in Mr Pope's Period of a Mile, introduces as bloody a Battle as can possibly be fought, without the Assistance of Steel or cold Iron.

As in the season of RUTTING (an uncouth phrase, by which the vulgar denote that gentle dalliance, which in the well-wooded forest of Hampshire, passes between lovers of the ferine[†] kind) if while the lofty crested stag meditates the amorous sport, a couple of puppies, or any other beasts of hostile note, should wander so near the temple of Venus Ferina, that the fair hind should shrink from the place, touched with that somewhat, either of fear or frolic, of nicety or skittishness with which Nature hath bedecked all females, or hath, at least, instructed them how to put it on; lest, through the indelicacy of males, the Samean[†] mysteries should be pried into by unhallowed eyes: for at the celebration of these rites, the female priestess cries out with her in Virgil[†] (who was then probably hard at work on such celebration)

— *Procul, O procul este, profani;*

Proclamat Vates, totoque absistite Luco.

— Far hence be souls profane,

The Sibyl cried, and from the grove abstain.

DRYDEN.

If, I say, while these sacred rites, which are in common to *Genus omne Animantium* [all living creatures], are in agitation between the stag and his mistress, any hostile beasts should venture too near, on the first hint given by the frightened hind, fierce and tremendous rushes forth the stag to the entrance of the thicket; there stands he sentinel over his love, stamps the ground with his foot, and with his horns brandished aloft in air, proudly provokes the apprehended foe to combat.

Thus, and more terrible, when he perceived the enemy's approach, leaped forth our hero. Many a step advanced he forwards, in order to conceal the trembling hind, and, if possible, to secure her retreat. And now Thwackum having first darted some livid lightning from his fiery eyes, began to thunder forth, 'Fie upon it! Fie upon it! Mr Jones. Is it possible you should be the person?' 'You see,' answered Jones, 'it is possible I should be here.' 'And who,' said Thwackum, 'is that wicked slut with you?' 'If I have any wicked slut with me,' cries Jones, 'it is possible I shall not let you know who she is.' 'I command you to tell

ferine wild-animal
Samean of Samos, sacred to Juno, Roman goddess of marriage

Virgil in *Aeneid*, VI, at entrance of the underworld

35 me immediately,' says Thwackum, 'and I would not have you imagine, young man, that your age, though it hath somewhat abridged the purpose of tuition, hath totally taken away the authority of the master. The relation of the master and scholar is indelible, as, indeed, all other relations are: for they all derive their original from Heaven. I would have you think yourself, therefore, as much obliged to obey me now, as when I taught you your first rudiments.' 'I believe you would,' cries Jones, 'but that will not happen, unless you had the same birchen argument to convince me.' 'Then I must tell you plainly,' said Thwackum, 'I am resolved to discover the wicked wretch.' 'And I must tell you plainly,' returned Jones, 'I am resolved you shall not.' Thwackum then offered¹ to advance, and Jones laid hold of his arms; which Mr Blifl endeavoured to rescue, declaring 'he would not see his old master insulted.'

Jones now finding himself engaged with two, thought it necessary to rid himself of one of his antagonists as soon as possible. He therefore, applied to the weakest first; and letting the parson go, he directed a blow at the young squire's breast, which luckily taking place, reduced him to measure his length on the ground.

Thwackum was so intent on the discovery, that the moment he found himself at liberty he stepped forward directly into the fern, without any great consideration of what might, in the mean time, befall his friend; but he had advanced a very few paces into the thicket, before Jones having defeated Blifl, overtook the parson, and dragged him backward by the skirt of his coat.

60 This parson had been a champion in his youth, and had won much honour by his fist, both at school and at the university. He had now, indeed, for a great number of years, declined the practice of that noble art; yet was his courage full as strong as his faith, and his body no less strong than either. He was moreover, as the reader may, perhaps, have conceived, somewhat irascible in his nature. When he looked back, therefore, and saw his friend stretched out on the ground, and found himself at the same time so roughly handled by one who had formerly been only passive in all conflicts between them (a circumstance which highly aggravated the whole), his patience at length gave way; he threw himself into a posture of offence, and collecting all his force, attacked Jones in the front, with as much impetuosity as he had formerly attacked him in the rear.

Our hero received the enemy's attack with the most undaunted intrepidity, and his bosom resounded with the blow. This he presently returned with no less violence, aiming likewise at the parson's breast; but he dexterously drove down the fist of Jones, so that it reached only

offered attempted

his belly, where two pounds of beef and as many of pudding were then deposited, and whence consequently no hollow sound could proceed. Many lusty blows, much more pleasant as well as easy to have seen, than to read or describe, were given on both sides; at last a violent fall in which Jones had thrown his knees into Thwackum's breast, so weakened the latter, that victory had been no longer dubious, had not Blifl, who had now recovered his strength, again renewed the fight, and, by engaging with Jones, given the parson a moment's time to shake his ears, and to regain his breath.

85 And now both together attacked our hero, whose blows did not retain that force with which they had fallen at first; so weakened was he by his combat with Thwackum: for though the pedagogue chose rather to play solos on the human instrument, and had been lately used to those only, yet he still retained enough of his ancient knowledge to perform his part very well in a duet.

The victory, according to modern custom, was like to be decided by numbers, when, on a sudden, a fourth pair of fists appeared in the battle, and immediately paid their compliments to the parson; the owner of them, at the same time, crying out, 'Are you not ashamed and be d — nd to you, to fall two of you upon one?'

95 The battle,[†] which was of the kind, that for distinction's sake is called royal,[†] now raged with the utmost violence during a few minutes; till Blifl being a second time laid sprawling by Jones, Thwackum condescended to apply for quarter to his new antagonist, who was now found to be Mr Western himself: for in the heat of the action none of the combatants had recognised him.

100 In fact, that honest squire, happening in his afternoon's walk with some company, to pass through the field where the bloody battle was fought, and having concluded from seeing three men engaged, and with of them must be on a side, he hastened from his companions, and with more gallantry than policy, espoused the cause of the weaker party. By which generous proceeding, he very probably prevented Mr Jones from becoming a victim to the wrath of Thwackum, and to the pious friendship which Blifl bore his old master: for besides the disadvantage of such odds, Jones had not yet sufficiently recovered the former strength of his broken arm. This reinforcement, however, soon put an end to the action, and Jones with his ally obtained the victory.

1749

battle . . . royal general struggle

Samuel Johnson

1709–84

Johnson suffered early from defective eyesight and from scrofula, for which he was 'touched' for a cure by Queen Anne. His unusual knowledge as the son of a Lichfield bookseller took him to Pembroke College, Oxford, which poverty forced him to leave. After unsuccessful schoolteaching in the Midlands and marriage in 1734 to a much older widow, he went with his pupil David Garrick (the future actor) to London, where he contributed a wide range of work, including his own versions of the parliamentary debates, to *The Gentleman's Magazine*. In the Grub-Street world of hack-writers, he slowly became known as versatile, learned and independent: his poem *London* (1738) attracted Pope's attention; another imitation of Juvenal *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, his first signed work, and his tragedy *Irene* appeared in 1749. Johnson's periodical essay series *The Rambler* (1750–2) and *The Idler* (1758–60) established his reputation as literary critic and moralist, consolidated by his eastern tale *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (1759). For some years he worked on his great *English Dictionary*, drawing on his wide reading: its publication in 1755 won public recognition and allowed him to repudiate the tardy patronage of Lord Chesterfield in a gesture symbolic of the professional writer's independence. This learning also benefited his edition of Shakespeare (1765), with its famous Preface.

Despite his tendency to melancholy, Johnson was a sociable man, the centre of various groups, notably the famous Club (1764), which comprised leading men of arts and public life (Reynolds, Garrick, Burke, Gibbon, Boswell, Goldsmith, Sheridan, C. J. Fox). His last twenty years, including his journey to the Hebrides in 1773, were documented in vivid detail by James Boswell in the *Life* (1791) and the *Tour* (1785). In the 1770s Johnson wrote political pamphlets on the Falkland Islands and against the American colonists' demands; his last major work was the series of prefaces known as the *Lives of the English poets* from the mid-seventeenth century to his own time, which embody his interest in literature and biography.

Johnson's large miscellaneous output, often hastily produced for

money or as a favour to a friend, almost always displays unexpected knowledge and a vigorous mind. A sincere Christian tortured by dark fears (he was haunted by Christ's parable of the talents), he became more regarded in the nineteenth century as the moralist-conversation-alist recorded by Boswell than the exponent of an allegedly cumbrous prose style. His restored reputation as a critic stands beside his great humanity: a friend of the derelict, he understood human frailty.

THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES[†]

The Tenth Satire of Juvenal Imitated

Let observation with extensive view,
Survey mankind, from China to Peru,[†]
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;
Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,
O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate,
Where wavering man, betrayed by venturous pride,
To tread the dreary paths without a guide,
As treacherous phantoms in the mist delude,
Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good:
How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,
Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice;
How nations sink, by darling schemes oppressed,
When vengeance listens to the fool's request.
Fate wings¹ with every wish th' afflictive dart,
Each gift of nature, and each grace of art,
With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,
With fatal sweetness elocution flows,
Impeachment stops the speaker's powerful breath,
And restless fire precipitates¹ on death.
But scarce observed, the knowing and the bold
Fall in the general massacre of gold;

The Vanity of Human Wishes Johnson from China . . . Peru from east to west,
'initiates' the first-century Roman satirist by everywhere
converting his stoicism into Christianity, his wings gives feathers to ensure accuracy on
historical portraits into modern examples target
(Hannibal into Charles XII of Sweden: images precipitates rushes down
of struggle and warfare recur). In style he
aims at the original's 'declamatory grandeur'

- Wide-wasting pest! that rages unconfined,
And crowds with crimes the records of mankind;
For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws,
For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws;
The dangers gather as the treasures rise.
Let history tell where rival kings command,
And dubious title shakes the maddened land,
When statutes glean^t the refuse of the sword,
How much more safe the vassal than the lord;
Low skulks the hind beneath the rage of power,
And leaves the wealthy traitor in the Tower,[†]
Touched his cottage, and his slumbers sound,
Though confiscation's vultures hover round.
The needy traveller, serene and gay,
Walks the wild heath, and sings his toil away.
Does envy seize thee? crush th' upbraiding joy,
Increase his riches and his peace destroy;
Now fears in dire vicissitude invade,
The rustling brake alarms, and quivering shade,
Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief,
One shows the plunder, and one hides the thief.
Yet still one general cry the skies assails,
And gain and grandeur load the tainted gales;
Few know the toiling statesman's fear or care,
Th' insidious rival and the gaping heir.
Once more, Democritus,[†] arise on earth,
With cheerful wisdom and instructive mirth,
See motley[†] life in modern trappings dressed,
And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest:
Thou who couldst laugh where want enchained caprice,
Toil crushed conceit, and man was of a piece;
Where wealth unloved without a mourner died,
And scarce a sycophant was fed by pride;
Where ne'er was known the form of mock debate,
Or seen a new-made mayor's unwieldy state;
Where change of favourites made no change of laws,
And senates heard before they judged a cause;
How wouldst thou shake at Britain's modish tribe,
Dart the quick taunt, and edge the piercing gibe!

statutes glean laws ruin those spared by war
Tower Tower of London: a prison
Democritus Greek 'laughing philosopher' of mankind's follies (c. 460–370 bc)
motley varied, but also the dress of a fool

- Attentive truth and nature to descry,
And pierce each scene with philosophic eye.
To thee were solemn toys or empty show,
The robes of pleasure and the veils of woe:
All aid the farce, and all thy mirth maintain,
Whose joys are causeless, or whose griefs are vain.
Such was the scorn that filled the sage's mind,
Renewed at every glance on humankind;
How just that scorn ere yet thy voice declare,
Search every state, and canvass every prayer.
Unnumbered suplicants crowd Preferment's[†] gate,
Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;
Delusive fortune hears th' incessant call,
They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.[†]
On every stage the foes of peace attend,
Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end.
Love ends with hope, the sinking statesman's door
Pours in the morning worshipping no more:
For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,
To growing wealth the dedicatory flies,
From every room descends the painted face,
That hung the bright Palladium[†] of the place,
And smoked in kitchens, or in auctions sold,
To better features yields the frame of gold:
For now no more we trace in every line
Heroic worth, benevolence divine:
The form distorted justifies the fall,
And detestation rids th' indignant wall.
But will not Britain hear the last appeal,
Sign her foes' doom, or guard her favourites' zeal?
Through freedom's sons no more remonstrance rings,
Degrading nobles and controlling kings;
Our supple tribes repress their patriot throats,
And ask no questions but the price of votes:
With weekly libels[†] and septennial ale,[†]
Their wish is full to riot and to rail.
In full-blown dignity, see Wolsey[†] stand,
Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand:

Preferment advancement to office (here, also its bestower)
evaporate . . . fall the image may be of a shooting star, or firework
Palladium the image of the goddess Pallas Athena, which protected Troy
libels scurrilous campaign literature
septennial ale bribes to the parliamentary electors at seven-year intervals
Wolsey the first of a series of representatives of different modes of life. Cardinal Wolsey (c. 1475–1530), Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII, fell from his great religious and secular power

To him the church, the realm, their powers consign,
Through him the rays of regal bounty shine,
Turned by his nod the stream of honour flows,
His smile alone security bestows:

105 Still to new heights his restless wishes tower,
Claim leads to claim, and power advances power;
Till conquest unresisted ceased to please,
And rights submitted, left him none to seize.

110 At length his sovereign frowns – the train of state
Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.
Where'er he turns he meets a stranger's eye,
His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;

115 At once is lost the pride of awful state,
The golden canopy, the glittering plate,
The regal palace, the luxurious board,
The liveried[†] army, and the menial lord.
With age, with cares, with maladies oppressed,
He seeks the refuge of monastic rest.

120 Grief aids disease, remembered folly stings,
And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings.
Speak thou, whose thoughts at humble peace repine,
Shall Wolsey's wealth, with Wolsey's end be thine?

Or liv'st thou now, with safer pride content,
The wisest justice on the banks of Trent?[†]
125 For why did Wolsey near the steeps of fate,
On weak foundations raise th' enormous weight?
Why but to sink beneath misfortune's blow,
With louder ruin to the gulfs below?

What gave great Villiers[†] to th' assassin's knife,
And fixed disease on Harley's[†] closing life?

130 What murdered Wentworth,[†] and what exiled Hyde,[†]
By kings protected, and to kings allied?
What but their wish indulged in courts to shine,
And power too great to keep, or to resign?

135 When first the college rolls receive his name,
The young enthusiast[†] quits his ease for fame;
Through all his veins the fever of renown
Burns from the strong contagion of the gown;

<i>liveried</i>	uniformed servants	<i>Wentworth</i>	Thomas Wentworth, Earl of
<i>Trent</i>	Midland river	<i>Strafford</i>	adviser to Charles I, executed 1641
<i>Villiers</i>	George, Duke of Buckingham,	<i>Hyde</i>	Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, Lord
	favourite of James I, murdered 1628		Chancellor under Charles II, father-in-law of
<i>Harley</i>	Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, Lord		James II, exiled 1667
	Treasurer until Queen Anne's death (1714),	<i>enthusiast</i>	as usual in this period, pejorative:
	then imprisoned		a zealot, fanatic

140 O'er Bodley's dome[†] his future labours spread,
And Bacon's[†] mansion trembles o'er his head.

Are these thy views? proceed, illustrious youth,
And virtue guard thee to the throne of truth!
Yet should thy soul indulge the generous heat,
Till captive science yields her last retreat;
145 Should reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
And pour on misty doubt resistless day;

Should no false kindness lure to loose delight,
Nor praise relax, nor difficulty fright;
Should tempting novelty thy cell refrain,
And sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain;
150 Should beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,
Nor claim the triumph of a lettered heart;

Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,
Nor melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade;
Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee:
155 Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause awhile from letters, to be wise;

There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron,[†] and the jail.
See nations slowly wise, and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
160 If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear Lydiat's[†] life, and Galileo's[†] end.

165 Nor deem, when learning her last prize bestows,
The glittering eminence exempt from foes;
See when the vulgar 'scape, despised or awed,
Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on Laud.[†]
From meaner minds, though smaller fines content,
170 The plundered palace or sequestered rent;

Marked out by dangerous parts he meets the shock,
And fatal learning leads him to the block:
Around his tomb let art and genius weep,
But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep.

175 The festal blazes, the triumphal show,

<i>Bodley's dome</i>	Bodleian Library, Oxford	<i>Lydiat</i>	Thomas Lydiat, mathematician, died
<i>(dome: buildings)</i>			poor in 1646
<i>Bacon</i>	there was a legend that the study of	<i>Galileo</i>	the astronomer Galileo was
	Roger Bacon, Oxford philosopher and		imprisoned by the Inquisition, and died blind
	scientist (d.1292), would collapse on its bridge		(1642)
	when a greater man passed under	<i>Laud</i>	William Laud, Chancellor of Oxford
<i>patron</i>	changed from the earlier 'garret': see		University, Archbishop of Canterbury,
	headnote on Chesterfield		executed 1645

The ravished standard, and the captive foe,
 The senate's thanks, the gazette's pompous tale,
 With force resistless o'er the brave prevail.
 Such bribes the rapid Greek[†] o'er Asia whirled,
 For such in distant lands the Britons shine,
 And stain with blood the Danube or the Rhine;
 This power has praise, that virtue scarce can warm,
 Till fame supplies the universal charm.
 Yet reason frowns on war's unequal game,
 Where wasted nations raise a single name,
 And mortgaged states their grandsires' wreaths regret,
 From age to age in everlasting debt;
 Wreaths which at last the dear-bought right convey
 To rust on medals, or on stones decay.

On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,
 How just his hopes let Swedish Charles[†] decide;
 A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
 No dangers fright him, and no labours tire;

O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,
 Unconquered lord of pleasure and of pain;
 No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,
 War sounds the trumpet, he rushes to the field;

Behold surrounding kings their power combine,
 And one capitate, and one resign;
 Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain;
 'Think nothing gained,' he cries, 'till nought remain,

'On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,
 'And all be mine beneath the polar sky.'
 The march begins in military state,
 And nations on his eye suspended wait;
 Stern famine guards the solitary coast,
 And winter barricades the realms of frost;

He comes, not want and cold his course delay; —
 Hide, blushing glory, hide Pultowa's day:
 The vanquished hero leaves his broken bands,
 And shows his miseries in distant lands;
 Condemned a needy supplicant to wait,
 While ladies interpose, and slaves debate.

rapid Greek Alexander the Great (356–323 bc)

Charles . . . Pultowa Charles XII of Sweden (1682–1718); Frederick IV of Denmark capitulated in 1700, Augustus II of Poland

abdicated in 1706 (l.200); defeated by Russia at Poltava (1709), C. went to Turkey; killed at Frederikshald, Norway, possibly by his own side

But did not chance at length her error mend?
 Did no subverted empire mark his end?
 Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound?
 Or hostile millions press him to the ground?

His fall was destined to a barren strand,
 A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
 He left the name, at which the world grew pale,
 To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

All times their scenes of pompous woes afford,
 From Persia's tyrant[†] to Bavaria's lord.

In gay hostility, and barbarous pride,
 With half mankind embattled at his side,
 Great Xerxes comes to seize the certain prey,
 And starves exhausted regions in his way;

Attendant Flattery counts his myriads o'er,
 Till counted myriads soothe his pride no more;
 Fresh praise is tried till madness fires his mind,
 The waves he lashes, and enchains the wind;

New powers are claimed, new powers are still bestowed,
 Till rude resistance lops the spreading god;
 The daring Greeks deride the martial show,
 And heap their valleys with the gaudy foe;

Th' insulted sea with humbler thoughts he gains,
 A single skiff to speed his flight remains;
 Th' incumbered oar scarce leaves the dreaded coast
 Through purple billows and a floating host.

The bold Bavarian[†] in a luckless hour,
 Tries the dread summits of Caesarean power,
 With unexpected legions bursts away,
 And sees defenceless realms receive his sway;

Short sway! fair Austria[†] spreads her mournful charms,
 The queen, the beauty, sets the world in arms;
 From hill to hill the beacon's rousing blaze
 Spreads wide the hope of plunder and of praise;

The fierce Croatian,[†] and the wild Hussar,[†]
 And all the sons of ravage crowd the war;
 The baffled prince in honour's flattering bloom
 Of hasty greatness finds the fatal doom,

Persia's tyrant Xerxes the Great punished the sea for destroying his boat-bridge; defeated by the Greeks in the sea battle of Salamis, 480 bc

bold Bavarian . . . Hussar Charles Albert

(1697–1745), Elector of Bavaria, became Holy Roman Emperor (l.242) despite the claims of Maria Theresa, fair Austria; his reign was short and unhappy. Croatian: with Hussar, troops of Austrian Empire

His foes' derision, and his subjects' blame,
 And steals to death from anguish and from shame.
 Enlarge my life with multitude of days,
 In health, in sickness, thus the suppliant prays;
 Hides from himself his state, and shuns to know
 That life protracted is protracted woe.
 Time hovers o'er, impatient to destroy,
 And shuts up all the passages of joy:
 In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour,
 The fruit autumnal, and the vernal flower,
 With listless eyes the dotard views the store,
 He views, and wonders that they please no more;
 Now pall the tasteless meats and joyless wines,
 And luxury with sighs her slave resigns.
 Approach, ye minstrels, try the soothing strain,
 Diffuse the tuneful lenitives[†] of pain:
 No sounds, alas, would touch th' impervious ear,
 Though dancing mountains witnessed Orpheus[†] near;
 Nor lute nor lyre his feeble powers attend,
 Nor sweeter music of a virtuous friend,
 But everlasting dictates crowd his tongue,
 Perversely grave, or positively wrong.
 The still returning tale, and lingering jest,
 Perplex the fawning niece and pampered guest,
 While growing hopes scarce awe the gathering sneer,
 And scarce a legacy can bribe to hear;
 The watchful guests still hint the last offence,
 The daughter's petulance, the son's expense,
 Improve his heady rage with treacherous skill,
 And mould his passions till they make his will.
 Unnumbered maladies his joints invade,
 Lay siege to life and press the dire blockade;
 But unextinguished avarice still remains,
 And dreaded losses aggravate his pains;
 He turns, with anxious heart and crippled hands,
 His bonds of debt, and mortgages of lands;
 Or views his coffers with suspicious eyes,
 Unlocks his gold, and counts it till he dies.
 But grant the virtues of a temperate prime,
 Bless with an age exempt from scorn or crime;

lenitives soothing medicines
Orpheus Greek bard, whose music moved
 mountains

An age that melts with unperceived decay,
 And glides in modest innocence away;
 Whose peaceful day benevolence endears,
 Whose night congratulating conscience cheers;
 The general favourite as the general friend:
 Such age there is, and who shall wish its end?
 Yet even on this her load misfortune flings,
 To press the weary minutes' flagging wings:
 New sorrow rises as the day returns,
 A sister sickens, or a daughter mourns.
 Now kindred merit fills the sable bier,
 Now lacerated friendship claims a tear.
 Year chases year, decay pursues decay,
 Still drops some joy from withering life away;
 New forms arise, and different views engage,
 Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage,
 Till pitying nature signs the last release,
 And bids afflicted worth retire to peace.
 But few there are whom hours like these await,
 Who set unclouded in the gulfs of Fate.
 From Lydia's monarch[†] should the search descend,
 By Solon[†] cautioned to regard his end,
 In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,
 Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise?
 From Marlborough's[†] eyes the streams of dotage flow,
 And Swift[†] expires a driveller and a show.
 The teeming mother, anxious for her race,
 Begg for each birth the fortune of a face:
 Yet Vane[†] could tell what ills from beauty spring;
 And Sedley[†] cursed the form that pleased a king.
 Ye nymphs of rosy lips and radiant eyes,
 Whom pleasure keeps too busy to be wise,
 Whom joys with soft varieties invite,
 By day the frolic, and the dance by night,
 Who frown with vanity, who smile with art,
 And ask the latest fashion of the heart,

Lydia's monarch . . . Solon the rich King
 Croesus, whom the Greek philosopher Solon
 advised that no man is happy until dead
Marlborough John Churchill, Duke of
 Marlborough (1650–1722), the great Whig
 victor of Blenheim, suffered from strokes
 after 1716
Swift M's political enemy, was declared of
 unsound mind in 1742 and had died as
 recently as 1745
Vane Anne Vane (1705–36), mistress of
 Frederick, Prince of Wales
Sedley Catherine Sedley (1657–1717),
 mistress of James II. (Both Vane and Sedley
 seem actually to have been ugly.)

35 deviation from exactness of resemblance. Other writings are safe, except from the malice of learnings, but these are in danger from every common reader; as the slipper ill executed was censured by a shoemaker who happened to stop in his way at the *Venus of Apelles*.[†]

40 But the fear of not being approved as just copiers of human manners is not the most important concern that an author of this sort ought to have before him. These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life. They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account.

45 That the highest degree of reverence should be paid to youth, and that nothing indecent should be suffered to approach their eyes or ears, are precepts extorted by sense and virtue from an ancient writer, by no means eminent for chastity of thought. The same kind, though not the same degree, of caution, is required in every thing which is laid before them, to secure them from unjust prejudices, perverse opinions, and incongruous combinations of images.

50 In the romances formerly written, every transaction and sentiment was so remote from all that passes among men that the reader was in very little danger of making any applications to himself; the virtues and crimes were equally beyond his sphere of activity; and he amused himself with heroes and with traitors, deliverers and persecutors, as with beings of another species, whose actions were regulated upon motives of their own, and who had neither faults nor excellencies in common with himself.

55 But when an adventurer is levelled with the rest of the world, and acts in such scenes of the universal drama as may be the lot of any other man, young spectators fix their eyes upon him with closer attention, and hope by observing his behaviour and success to regulate their own practices, when they shall be engaged in the like part.

60 For this reason these familiar histories may perhaps be made of greater use than the solemnities of professed morality, and convey the knowledge of vice and virtue with more efficacy than axioms and definitions. But if the power of example is so great as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited; and that

Apelles Greek painter (fourth century BC): he altered the slipper, then told the cobbler to 'stick to his last'

75 which is likely to operate so strongly should not be mischievous or uncertain in its effects.

80 The chief advantage which these fictions have over real life is that their authors are at liberty, though not to invent, yet to select objects, and to cull from the mass of mankind those individuals upon which the attention ought most to be employed, as a diamond, though it cannot be made, may be polished by art, and placed in such a situation as to display that lustre which before was buried among common stones.

85 It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature which are most proper for imitation: greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness. If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account; or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind, as upon a mirror which shows all that presents itself without discrimination.

90 It is therefore not a sufficient vindication of a character that it is drawn as it appears, for many characters ought never to be drawn; nor of a narrative that the train of events is agreeable to observation and experience, for that observation which is called knowledge of the world will be found much more frequently to make men cunning than good. The purpose of these writings is surely not only to show mankind, but to provide that they may be seen hereafter with less hazard; to teach the means of avoiding the snares which are laid by treachery for innocence without infusing any wish for that superiority with which the betrayer flatters his vanity; to give the power of counteracting fraud without the temptation to practise it; to initiate youth by mock encounters in the art of necessary defence, and to increase prudence without impairing virtue.

105 Many writers, for the sake of following nature, so mingle good and bad qualities in their principal personages that they are both equally conspicuous; and as we accompany them through their adventures with delight, and are led by degrees to interest ourselves in their favour, we lose the abhorrence of their faults, because they do not hinder our pleasure, or perhaps, regard them with some kindness for being united with so much merit.

110 There have been men indeed splendidly wicked, whose endowments threw a brightness on their crimes, and whom scarce any villainy made perfectly detestable, because they never could be wholly divested of their excellencies; but such have been in all ages the great corrupters of the world, and their resemblance ought no more to be preserved than the art of murdering without pain.

115 Some have advanced, without due attention to the consequences of

Having therefore no assistance but from general grammar, I applied myself to the perusal of our writers; and noting whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees, I reduced to method, establishing to myself, in the progress of the work, such rules as experience and analogy suggested to me; experience, which practice and observation were continually increasing; and analogy, which, though in some words obscure, was evident in others.

In adjusting the orthography,[†] which has been to this time unsettled and fortuitous, I found it necessary to distinguish those irregularities that are inherent in our tongue, and perhaps coeval with it, from others which the ignorance or negligence of later writers has produced. Every language has its anomalies, which, though inconvenient, and in themselves once unnecessary, must be tolerated among the imperfections of human things, and which require only to be registered, that they may not be increased, and ascertained, that they may not be confounded: but every language has likewise its improprieties and absurdities, which it is the duty of the lexicographer to correct or proscribe. . . .

The solution of all difficulties, and the supply of all defects, must be sought in the examples subjoined to the various senses of each word, and ranged according to the time of their authors.

When first I collected these authorities, I was desirous that every quotation should be useful to some other end than the illustration of a word; I therefore extracted from philosophers principles of science; from historians remarkable facts; from chemists complete processes; from divines striking exhortations; and from poets beautiful descriptions. Such is design, while it is yet at a distance from execution. When the time called upon me to range this accumulation of elegance and wisdom into an alphabetical series, I soon discovered that the bulk of my volumes would fright away the student, and was forced to depart from my scheme of including all that was pleasing or useful in English literature, and reduce my transcripts very often to clusters of words in which scarcely any meaning is retained: thus to the weariness of copying, I was condemned to add the vexation of expunging. Some passages I have yet spared which may relieve the labour of verbal searches, and intersperse with verdure and flowers the dusty deserts of barren philology.

The examples, thus mutilated, are no longer to be considered as conveying the sentiments or doctrine of their authors; the word for the sake of which they are inserted, with all its appendant clauses, has been carefully preserved, but it may sometimes happen, by hasty detraction,

that the general tendency of the sentence may be changed: the divine may desert his tenets, or the philosopher his system.

Some of the examples have been taken from writers who were never mentioned as masters of elegance, or models of style; but words must be sought where they are used; and in what pages eminent for purity can terms of manufacture or agriculture be found? Many quotations serve no other purpose than that of proving the bare existence of words, and are therefore selected with less scrupulousness than those which are to teach their structures and relations.

My purpose was to admit no testimony of living authors, that I might not be misled by partiality, and that none of my contemporaries might have reason to complain; nor have I departed from this resolution but when some performance of uncommon excellence excited my veneration, when my memory supplied me from late books with an example that was wanting, or when my heart, in the tenderness of friendship, solicited admission for a favourite name.

So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations that I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the Restoration, whose works I regard as *the wells of English undefiled*, as the pure sources of genuine diction. Our language, for almost a century, has, by the concurrence of many causes, been gradually departing from its original Teutonic[†] character, and deviating towards a Gallic[†] structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recall it, by making our ancient volumes the ground-work of style, admitting among the additions of later times only such as may supply real deficiencies, such as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate easily with our native idioms.

But as every language has a time of rudeness antecedent to perfection, as well as of false refinement and declension, I have been cautious lest my zeal for antiquity might drive me into times too remote, and crowd my book with words now no longer understood. I have fixed Sidney's[†] work for the boundary beyond which I make few excursions. From the authors which rose in the time of Elizabeth, a speech might be formed adequate to all the purposes of use and elegance. If the language of theology were extracted from Hooker and the translation of the Bible; the terms of natural knowledge from Bacon; the phrases of policy, war, and navigation from Raleigh; the dialect of poetry and fiction from Spenser and Sidney; and the diction of common life from Shakespeare, few ideas would be lost to mankind for want of English words in which they might be expressed. . . .

110 Of the event of this work, for which, having laboured it with so
 much application, I cannot but have some degree of parental fondness,
 it is natural to form conjectures. Those who have been persuaded to
 think well of my design will require that it should fix our language, and
 115 put a stop to those alterations which time and chance have hitherto
 been suffered to make in it without opposition. With this consequence
 I will confess that I flattered myself for a while; but now begin to fear
 that I have indulged expectation which neither reason nor experience
 can justify. When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one
 120 after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that
 promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice
 may the lexicographer be derided who being able to produce no example
 of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability
 shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure
 it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to change sublunary
 125 nature, or clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation. . . .

In hope of giving longevity to that which its own nature forbids to
 be immortal, I have devoted this book, the labour of years, to the
 honour of my country, that we may no longer yield the palm of
 philology without a contest to the nations of the continent. The chief
 130 glory of every people arises from its authors: whether I shall add any
 thing by my own writings to the reputation of English literature must
 be left to time: much of my life has been lost under the pressure of
 disease; much has been trifled away; and much has always been spent
 in provision for the day that was passing over me; but I shall not think
 135 my employment useless or ignoble, if by my assistance foreign nations,
 and distant ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and
 understand the teachers of truth; if my labours afford light to the
 repositories of science, and add celebrity to Bacon, to Hooker, to
 Milton, and to Boyle. . . .

140 In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not
 be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was
 ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little
 solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it
 condemns; yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it that the *English*
 145 *Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without
 any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or
 under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and
 distraction, in sickness and in sorrow: and it may repress the triumph
 of malignant criticism to observe that if our language is not here fully
 150 displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers
 have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now
 immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil
 of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge

and co-operating diligence of the Italian academicians did not secure
 them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied critics of France, when
 155 fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its
 economy, and give their second edition another form, I may surely be
 contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in
 this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my
 work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the
 160 grave,[†] and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore
 dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from
 censure or from praise.

1755

From RASSELAS[†]

Chap. VI A Dissertation on the Art of Flying

Among the artists that had been allured into the happy valley, to labour
 for the accommodation and pleasure of its inhabitants, was a man
 eminent for his knowledge of the mechanic powers, who had contrived
 many engines both of use and recreation. By a wheel, which the stream
 5 turned, he forced the water into a tower, whence it was distributed to
 all the apartments of the palace. He erected a pavilion in the garden,
 around which he kept the air always cool by artificial showers. One of
 the groves, appropriated to the ladies, was ventilated by fans, to which
 the rivulet that run through it gave a constant motion; and instruments
 of soft music were placed at proper distances, of which some played by
 10 the impulse of the wind, and some by the power of the stream.

This artist was sometimes visited by Rasselas, who was pleased with
 every kind of knowledge, imagining that the time would come when
 all his acquisitions should be of use to him in the open world. He came
 one day to amuse himself in his usual manner, and found the master
 15 busy in building a sailing chariot: he saw that the design was practicable
 upon a level surface, and with expressions of great esteem solicited its
 completion. The workman was pleased to find himself so much regarded
 by the prince, and resolved to gain yet higher honours. 'Sir,' said he,
 'you have seen but a small part of what the mechanic sciences can
 20 perform. I have been long of opinion that, instead of the tardy

grave J's wife had died in 1752

Rasselas Rasselas, son of the Abyssinian

emperor, is confined in the 'happy valley',
 but hopes some day to see the outside world

conveyance of ships and chariots, man might use the swifter migration of wings; that the fields of air are open to knowledge, and that only ignorance and idleness need crawl upon the ground.'

25 This hint rekindled the prince's desire of passing the mountains; having seen what the mechanist had already performed, he was willing to fancy that he could do more; yet resolved to inquire further before he suffered hope to afflict him by disappointment. 'I am afraid,' said he to the artist, 'that your imagination prevails over your skill, and that you now tell me rather what you wish than what you know. Every animal has his element assigned him; the birds have the air, and man and beasts the earth.' 'So,' replied the mechanist, 'fishes have the water, in which yet beasts can swim by nature, and men by art. He that can swim needs not despair to fly: to swim is to fly in a grosser fluid, and to fly is to swim in a subtler. We are only to proportion our power of resistance to the different density of the matter through which we are to pass. You will be necessarily upborne by the air, if you can renew any impulse upon it faster than the air can recede from the pressure.'

40 'But the exercise of swimming,' said the prince, 'is very laborious; the strongest limbs are soon wearied; I am afraid the act of flying will be yet more violent, and wings will be of no great use, unless we can fly further than we can swim.'

45 'The labour of rising from the ground,' said the artist, 'will be great, as we see it in the heavier domestic fowls; but, as we mount higher, the earth's attraction, and the body's gravity, will be gradually diminished, till we shall arrive at a region where the man will float in the air without any tendency to fall: no care will then be necessary but to move forwards, which the gentlest impulse will effect. You, sir, whose curiosity is so extensive, will easily conceive with what pleasure a philosopher, furnished with wings, and hovering in the sky, would see the earth, and all its inhabitants, rolling beneath him, and presenting to him successively, by its diurnal[†] motion, all the countries within the same parallel. How must it amuse the pendent spectator to see the moving scene of land and ocean, cities and deserts! To survey with equal security the marts of trade, and the fields of battle; mountains infested by barbarians, and fruitful regions gladdened by plenty, and lulled by peace! How easily shall we then trace the Nile through all his passage; pass over to distant regions, and examine the face of nature from one extremity of the earth to the other!'

60 'All this,' said the prince, 'is much to be desired, but I am afraid that no man will be able to breathe in these regions of speculation and tranquillity. I have been told that respiration is difficult upon lofty mountains, yet from these precipices, though so high as to produce

diurnal daily

65 great tenuity of the air, it is very easy to fall: therefore I suspect that from any height where life can be supported there may be danger of too quick descent.'

70 'Nothing,' replied the artist, 'will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must be first overcome. If you will favour my project I will try the first flight at my own hazard. I have considered the structure of all volant[†] animals, and find the folding continuity of the bat's wings most easily accommodated to the human form. Upon this model I shall begin my task tomorrow, and in a year expect to tower into the air beyond the malice or pursuit of man. But I will work only on this condition, that the art shall not be divulged, and that you shall not require me to make wings for any but ourselves.'

75 'Why,' said Rasselas, 'should you envy others so great an advantage? All skill ought to be exerted for universal good; every man has owed much to others, and ought to repay the kindness that he has received.'

80 'If men were all virtuous,' returned the artist, 'I should with great alacrity teach them all to fly. But what would be the security of the good, if the bad could at pleasure invade them from the sky? Against an army sailing through the clouds neither walls, nor mountains, nor seas, could afford any security. A flight of northern savages might hover in the wind, and light at once with irresistible violence upon the capital of a fruitful region that was rolling under them. Even this valley, the retreat of princes, the abode of happiness, might be violated by the sudden descent of some of the naked nations that swarm on the coast of the southern sea.'

90 The prince promised secrecy, and waited for the performance, not wholly hopeless of success. He visited the work from time to time, observed its progress, and remarked many ingenious contrivances to facilitate motion, and unite levity with strength. The artist was every day more certain that he should leave vultures and eagles behind him, and the contagion of his confidence seized upon the prince.

95 In a year the wings were finished, and, on a morning appointed, the maker appeared furnished for flight on a little promontory: he waved his pinions a while to gather air, then leaped from his stand, and in an instant dropped into the lake. His wings, which were of no use in the air, sustained him in the water, and the prince drew him to land, half dead with terror and vexation.

volant flying

Chap. X *A Dissertation upon Poetry*

[The poet Imlac tells of his experience in the outside world.]

‘Wherever I went, I found that poetry was considered as the highest learning, and regarded with a veneration somewhat approaching to that which man would pay to the angelic nature. And it yet fills me with wonder that, in almost all countries, the most ancient poets are considered as the best: whether it be that every other kind of knowledge is an acquisition gradually attained, and poetry is a gift conferred at once; or that the first poetry of every nation surprised them as a novelty, and retained the credit by consent which it received by accident at first: or whether, as the province of poetry is to describe nature and passion, which are always the same, the first writers took possession of the most striking objects for description, and the most probable occurrences for fiction, and left nothing to those that followed them but transcription of the same events, and new combinations of the same images. Whatever be the reason, it is commonly observed that the early writers are in possession of nature, and their followers of art: that the first excel in strength and invention, and the latter in elegance and refinement.

‘I was desirous to add my name to this illustrious fraternity. I read all the poets of Persia and Arabia, and was able to repeat by memory the volumes that are suspended in the mosque of Mecca.[†] But I soon found that no man was ever great by imitation. My desire of excellence impelled me to transfer my attention to nature and to life. Nature was to be my subject, and men to be my auditors. I could never describe what I had not seen: I could not hope to move those with delight or terror whose interests and opinions I did not understand.

‘Being now resolved to be a poet, I saw every thing with a new purpose; my sphere of attention was suddenly magnified: no kind of knowledge was to be overlooked. I ranged mountains and deserts for images and resemblances, and pictured upon my mind every tree of the forest and flower of the valley. I observed with equal care the crags of the rock and the pinnacles of the palace. Sometimes I wandered along the mazes of the rivulet, and sometimes watched the changes of the summer clouds. To a poet nothing can be useless. Whatever is beautiful, and whatever is dreadful, must be familiar to his imagination: he must be conversant with all that is awfully vast or elegantly little. The plants of the garden, the animals of the wood, the minerals of the earth, and meteors of the sky, must all concur to store his mind with inexhaustible variety: for every idea is useful for the enforcement or decoration of moral or religious truth; and he who knows most will have most power

of diversifying his scenes, and of gratifying his reader with remote allusions and unexpected instruction.

‘All the appearances of nature I was therefore careful to study, and every country which I have surveyed has contributed something to my poetical powers.’

‘In so wide a survey,’ said the prince, ‘you must surely have left much unobserved. I have lived, till now, within the circuit of these mountains, and yet cannot walk abroad without the sight of something which I had never beheld before, or never heeded.’

‘The business of a poet,’ said Imlac, ‘is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features as recall the original to every mind; and must neglect the minuter discriminations, which one may have remarked, and another have neglected, for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness.

‘But the knowledge of nature is only half the task of a poet; he must be acquainted likewise with all the modes of life. His character requires that he estimate the happiness and misery of every condition; observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations, and trace the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the spriteliness of infancy to the despondence of decrepitude. He must divest himself of the prejudices of his age or country; he must consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state; he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same: he must therefore content himself with the slow progress of his name; contemn the applause of his own time, and commit his claims to the justice of posterity. He must write as the interpreter of nature, and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations; as a being superior to time and place.

‘His labour is not yet at an end: he must know many languages and many sciences; and, that his style may be worthy of his thoughts, must, by incessant practice, familiarise to himself every delicacy of speech and grace of harmony.’

1759

From PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE[†]

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight a while, by that novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest; but the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.

Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.

It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It was said of Euripides[†] that every verse was a precept; and it may be said of Shakespeare that from his works may be collected a system of civil and economical prudence. Yet his real power is not shown in the splendour of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable, and the tenor of his dialogue; and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations will succeed like the pedant in Hierocles,[†] who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.

It will not easily be imagined how much Shakespeare excels in accommodating his sentiments to real life but by comparing him with other authors. It was observed of the ancient schools of declamation that the more diligently they were frequented, the more was the student disqualified for the world, because he found nothing there which he should ever meet in any other place. The same remark may be applied

Preface to Shakespeare Johnson's edition of Shakespeare (1765) had detailed notes and a brief general comment on each play. The great Preface takes up many current topics: the relation of art to life; the mixing of tragedy and comedy; the dramatic 'unities' of time and place. In his usual manner, Johnson assesses his author's virtues and

faults; his views, often shocking to the modern reader, are carefully considered and profoundly aware of the functions of literature; the plays had survived by their wide appeal to human experience rather than dramatic theory
Euripides Greek tragedian (fifth century bc)
Hierocles Greek philosopher (fifth century ad)

to every stage but that of Shakespeare. The theatre, when it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon topics which will never arise in the commerce of mankind. But the dialogue of this author is often so evidently determined by the incident which produces it, and is pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation, and common occurrences.

Upon every other stage the universal agent is love, by whose power all good and evil is distributed, and every action quickened or retarded. To bring a lover, a lady, and a rival into the fable; to entangle them in contradictory obligations, perplex them with oppositions of interest, and harass them with violence of desires inconsistent with each other; to make them meet in rapture and part in agony; to fill their mouths with hyperbolic joy and outrageous sorrow; to distress them as nothing human ever was distressed; to deliver them as nothing human ever was delivered is the business of a modern dramatist. For this, probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved. But love is only one of many passions, and as it has no great influence upon the sum of life, it has little operation in the dramas of a poet who caught his ideas from the living world, and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity.

Characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and preserved, yet perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other. I will not say with Pope that every speech may be assigned to the proper speaker, because many speeches there are which have nothing characteristic; but perhaps, though some may be equally adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find any that can be properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant. The choice is right, when there is reason for choice.

Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolic or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf; and he that should form his expectations of human affairs from the play, or from the tale, would be equally deceived. Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion. Even where the agency is supernatural the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world: Shakespeare approximates[†] the

approximates brings near

remote, and familiarises the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said that he has not only shown human nature as it acts in real exigences, but as it would be found in trials to which it cannot be exposed.

This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed[†] his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.

His adherence to general nature has exposed him to the censure of critics, who form their judgments upon narrower principles. Dennis[†] and Rymer[†] think his Romans not sufficiently Roman; and Voltaire[†] censures his kings as not completely royal. Dennis is offended that Menenius, a senator of Rome, should play the buffoon; and Voltaire perhaps thinks decency violated when the Danish usurper is represented as a drunkard. But Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident; and if he preserves the essential character, is not very careful of distinctions superinduced and adventitious. His story requires Romans or kings, but he thinks only on men. He knew that Rome, like every other city, had men of all dispositions; and wanting a buffoon, he went into the senate-house for that which the senate-house would certainly have afforded him. He was inclined to show an usurper and a murderer not only odious but despicable; he therefore added drunkenness to his other qualities, knowing that kings love wine like other men, and that wine exerts its natural power upon kings. These are the petty cavils of petty minds; a poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition, as a painter, satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery.

The censure which he has incurred by mixing comic and tragic scenes, as it extends to all his works, deserves more consideration. Let the fact be first stated, and then examined.

Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary[†] nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the

mazed confused
Dennis John Dennis, *Essay on Shakespeare*
(1712)
Rymer Thomas Rymer, *A Short View of*
Tragedy (1692; it included a notorious attack
on *Othello*)

Voltaire 1694–1778, French neo-classical
critic
sublunary beneath the moon, on earth

same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

Out of this chaos of mingled purposes and casualties the ancient poets, according to the laws which custom had prescribed, selected some the crimes of men, and some their absurdities; some the momentous vicissitudes of life, and some the lighter occurrences; some the terror of distress, and some the gaieties of prosperity. Thus rose the two modes of imitation known by the names of tragedy and comedy, compositions intended to promote different ends by contrary means, and considered as so little allied that I do not recollect among the Greeks or Romans a single writer who attempted both.

Shakespeare has united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind but in one composition. Almost all his plays are divided between serious and ludicrous characters, and, in the successive evolutions of the design, sometimes produce seriousness and sorrow, and sometimes levity and laughter.

That this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism[†] will be readily allowed; but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. That the mingled drama may convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy cannot be denied, because it includes both in its alternations of exhibition, and approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life, by showing how great machinations and slender designs may promote or obviate one another, and the high and the low co-operate in the general system by unavoidable concatenation. . . .

Shakespeare engaged in dramatic poetry with the world open before him; the rules of the ancients were yet known to few; the public judgment was unformed; he had no example of such fame as might force him upon imitation, nor critics of such authority as might restrain his extravagance. He therefore indulged his natural disposition, and his disposition, as Rymer has remarked, led him to comedy. In tragedy he often writes with great appearance of toil and study what is written at last with little felicity; but in his comic scenes, he seems to produce without labour what no labour can improve. In tragedy he is always struggling after some occasion to be comic, but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature.

In his tragic scenes there is always something wanting, but his comedy often surpasses expectation or desire. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy for the greater part by

rules of criticism formulations based on
ancient writers' practice

incident and action. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.

The force of his comic scenes has suffered little diminution from the changes made by a century and a half in manners or in words. As his personages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable to all times and to all places; they are natural, and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits are only superficial dyes, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tint, without any remains of former lustre; but the discriminations of true passion are the colours of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance which combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive¹ qualities neither admits increase, nor suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant¹ of Shakespeare. . . .

Shakespeare with his excellencies has likewise faults, and faults sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit. I shall show them in the proportion in which they appear to me, without envious malignity or superstitious veneration. No question can be more innocently discussed than a dead poet's pretensions to renown; and little regard is due to that bigotry which sets candour higher than truth.

His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time or place.

The plots are often so loosely formed that a very slight consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued that he seems not always fully to comprehend his own design. He omits opportunities of instructing or delighting which the train of his story seems to force

primitive basic, essential

adamant hard stone

upon him, and apparently rejects those exhibitions which would be more affecting, for the sake of those which are more easy.

It may be observed that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labour, to snatch the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented. . . .

In his comic scenes he is seldom very successful when he engages his characters in reciprocations of smartness and contests of sarcasm; their jests are commonly gross, and their pleasantries licentious; neither his gentlemen nor his ladies have much delicacy, nor are sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of refined manners. Whether he represented the real conversation of his time is not easy to determine; the reign of Elizabeth is commonly supposed to have been a time of stateliness, formality, and reserve, yet perhaps the relaxations of that severity were not very elegant. There must, however, have been always some modes of gaiety preferable to others, and a writer ought to choose the best.

In tragedy his performance seems constantly to be worse as his labour is more. The effusions of passion which exigence forces out are for the most part striking and energetic; but whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumour, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity.

In narration he affects a disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution, and tells the incident imperfectly in many words which might have been more plainly delivered in few. Narration in dramatic poetry is naturally tedious as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action; it should therefore always be rapid, and enlivened by frequent interruption. Shakespeare found it an encumbrance, and instead of lightening it by brevity, endeavoured to recommend it by dignity and splendour.

His declamations or set speeches are commonly cold and weak, for his power was the power of nature; when he endeavoured, like other tragic writers, to catch opportunities of amplification, and instead of inquiring what the occasion demanded, to show how much his stores of knowledge could supply, he seldom escapes without the pity or resentment of his reader.

It is incident to him to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment which he cannot well express, and will not reject; he struggles with it a while, and if it continues stubborn, comprises it in words such as occur, and leaves it to be disentangled and evolved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it.

Not that always where the language is intricate the thought is subtle,

or the image always great where the line is bulky; the equality of words to things is very often neglected, and trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas disappoint the attention to which they are recommended by sonorous epithets and swelling figures.

But the admirers of this great poet have most reason to complain when he approaches nearest to his highest excellence, and seems fully resolved to sink them in dejection, and mollify them with tender emotions by the fall of greatness, the danger of innocence, or the crosses of love. What he does best, he soon ceases to do. He is not long soft and pathetic without some idle conceit,[†] or contemptible equivocation.[†] He no sooner begins to move than he counteracts himself; and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity.

A quibble[†] is to Shakespeare what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures, it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind; and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple[†] for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight that he was content to purchase it by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.

It will be thought strange that, in enumerating the defects of this writer, I have not yet mentioned his neglect of the unities;[†] his violation of those laws which have been instituted and established by the joint authority of poets and of critics.

For his other deviations from the art of writing, I resign him to critical justice, without making any other demand in his favour than that which must be indulged to all human excellence; that his virtues be rated with his failings. But from the censure which this irregularity may bring upon him, I shall, with due reverence to that learning which I must oppose, adventure to try how I can defend him.

His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws; nothing more is necessary to all the praise which they expect than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be

conceit witty comparison
equivocation double meaning
quibble pun. J. was unsympathetic to such wit and ambiguity: see *Life of Cowley* (p. 350)

golden apple for this Atalanta lost her race
unities principles that a single united action should happen in one day in one place

understood, that the incidents be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural, and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is to be sought.

In his other works he has well enough preserved the unity of action. He has not, indeed, an intrigue regularly perplexed and regularly unravelled; he does not endeavour to hide his design only to discover it, for this is seldom the order of real events, and Shakespeare is the poet of nature. But his plan has commonly what Aristotle[†] requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence. There are perhaps some incidents that might be spared, as in other poets there is much talk that only fills up time upon the stage; but the general system makes gradual advances, and the end of the play is the end of expectation.

To the unities of time and place he has shown no regard, and perhaps a nearer view of the principles on which they stand will diminish their value, and withdraw from them the veneration which, from the time of Corneille,[†] they have very generally received, by discovering that they have given more trouble to the poet than pleasure to the auditor.

The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible. The critics hold it impossible that an action of months or years can be possibly believed to pass in three hours; or that the spectator can suppose himself to sit in the theatre, while ambassadors go and return between distant kings, while armies are levied and towns besieged, while an exile wanders and returns, or till he whom they saw courting his mistress shall lament the untimely fall of his son. The mind revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it departs from the resemblance of reality.

From the narrow limitation of time necessarily arises the contraction of place. The spectator who knows that he saw the first act at Alexandria cannot suppose that he sees the next at Rome, at a distance to which not the dragons of Medea[†] could, in so short a time, have transported him; he knows with certainty that he has not changed his place; and he knows that place cannot change itself; that what was a house cannot become a plain; that what was Thebes can never be Persepolis.

Such is the triumphant language with which a critic exults over the misery of an irregular poet, and exults commonly without resistance or reply. It is time therefore to tell him, by the authority of Shakespeare, that he assumes as an unquestionable principle a position which, while

Aristotle fourth century bc Greek, greatest critic of antiquity (*Poetics*)
Corneille French neo-classical dramatist (1606–84)
Medea character in Greek mythology and tragedy

his breath is forming it into words, his understanding pronounces to be false. It is false that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatic fable in its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever credited. . . .

325 The truth is that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They come to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place; but the different actions that complete a story may be in places very remote from each other; and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first Athens, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre?

330 By supposition, as place is introduced, time may be extended; the time required by the fable elapses for the most part between the acts; for, of so much of the action as is represented, the real and poetical duration is the same. If, in the first act, preparations for war against Mithridates are represented to be made in Rome, the event of the war may, without absurdity, be represented, in the catastrophe, as happening in Pontus; we know that there is neither war, nor preparation for war; we know that we are neither in Rome nor Pontus; that neither Mithridates nor Lucullus are before us. The drama exhibits successive imitations of successive actions, and why may not the second imitation represent an action that happened years after the first, if it be so connected with it that nothing but time can be supposed to intervene? Time is, of all modes of existence, most obsequious[†] to the imagination; a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore willingly permit it to be contracted when we only see their imitation.

350 It will be asked how the drama moves, if it is not credited. It is credited with all the credit due to a drama. It is credited, whenever it moves, as a just picture of a real original; as representing to the auditor what he would himself feel if he were to do or suffer what is there feigned to be suffered or to be done. The reflection that strikes the heart is not that the evils before us are real evils, but that they are evils to which we ourselves may be exposed. If there be any fallacy, it is not that we fancy the players but that we fancy ourselves unhappy for a moment; but we rather lament the possibility than suppose the presence of misery, as a mother weeps over her babe when she remembers that death may take it from her. The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more.

obsequious compliant

365 Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind. When the imagination is recreated by a painted landscape, the trees are not supposed capable to give us shade, or the fountains coolness; but we consider how we should be pleased with such fountains playing beside us, and such woods waving over us. We are agitated in reading the history of Henry the Fifth, yet no man takes his book for the field of Agincourt. A dramatic exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish its effect. Familiar comedy is often more powerful on the theatre than in the page; imperial tragedy is always less. The humour of Petruccio[†] may be heightened by grimace; but what voice or what gesture can hope to add dignity or force to the soliloquy of Cato?[†]

375 A play read affects the mind like a play acted. It is therefore evident that the action is not supposed to be real, and it follows that between the acts a longer or shorter time may be allowed to pass, and that no more account of space or duration is to be taken by the auditor of a drama than by the reader of a narrative, before whom may pass in an hour the life of a hero, or the revolutions of an empire.

380 Whether Shakespeare knew the unities, and rejected them by design, or deviated from them by happy ignorance, it is, I think, impossible to decide, and useless to inquire. We may reasonably suppose that, when he rose to notice, he did not want the counsels and admonitions of scholars and critics, and that he at last deliberately persisted in a practice which he might have begun by chance. . . .

From General Note on *King Lear*[†]

But though this moral be incidentally enforced, Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and, what is yet more strange, to the faith of chronicles.[†] Yet this conduct is justified by the Spectator, who blames Tate for giving Cordelia success and happiness in his alteration, and declares that in his opinion *the tragedy has lost half its beauty*. Dennis has remarked, whether justly or not, that, to secure the favourable reception of *Cato*, *the town was poisoned with much false and abominable criticism*, and that endeavours had been used to discredit and decry poetical justice. A play in which the wicked

Petruccio in *The Taming of the Shrew* happy ending in Nahum Tate's 1681 adaptation, Johnson is concerned that the General Note on *King Lear* In his comment consequence of evil be clearly demonstrated on *King Lear*, usually performed with a chronicles Shakespeare's sources

prosper, and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of human life: but since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded that the observation of justice makes a play worse; or, that if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not always rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue.

In the present case the public has decided. Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity. And, if my sensations could add any thing to the general suffrage, I might relate that I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor. . . .

1765

From A JOURNEY TO THE WESTERN ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND [*Highland Scenery*]

We were now in the bosom of the Highlands, with full leisure to contemplate the appearance and properties of mountainous regions, such as have been, in many countries, the last shelters of national distress, and are everywhere the scenes of adventures, stratagems, surprises and escapes. . . .

Of the hills many may be called with Homer's *Ida abundant in springs*, but few can deserve the epithet which he bestows upon Pelion by *waving their leaves*. They exhibit very little variety, being almost wholly covered with dark heath, and even that seems to be checked in its growth. What is not heath is nakedness, a little diversified by now and then a stream rushing down the steep. An eye accustomed to flowery pastures and waving harvests is astonished and repelled by this wide extent of hopeless sterility. The appearance is that of matter incapable of form or usefulness, dismissed by nature from her care and disinherited of her favours, left in its original elemental state, or quickened only with one sullen power of useless vegetation.

It will very readily occur that this uniformity of barrenness can afford very little amusement to the traveller; that it is easy to sit at home and conceive rocks and heath, and waterfalls; and that these journeys are useless labours, which neither impregnate the imagination, nor enlarge the understanding. It is true that of far the greater part of things, we must content ourselves with such knowledge as description may exhibit,

or analogy supply; but it is true likewise that these ideas are always incomplete, and that at least, till we have compared them with realities, we do not know them to be just. As we see more, we become possessed of more certainties, and consequently gain more principles of reasoning, and found a wider basis of analogy.

Regions mountainous and wild, thinly inhabited, and little cultivated, make a great part of the earth, and he that has never seen them must live unacquainted with much of the face of nature, and with one of the great scenes of human existence.

As the day advanced towards noon, we entered a narrow valley not very flowery, but sufficiently verdant. Our guides told us that the horses could not travel all day without rest or meat,[†] and entreated us to stop here, because no grass would be found in any other place. The request was reasonable and the argument cogent. We therefore willingly dismounted and diverted ourselves as the place gave us opportunity.

I sat down on a bank such as a writer of romance might have delighted to feign. I had indeed no trees to whisper over my head, but a clear rivulet streamed at my feet. The day was calm, the air soft, and all was rudeness, silence, and solitude. Before me, and on either side, were high hills, which by hindering the eye from ranging, forced the mind to find entertainment for itself. Whether I spent the hour well I know not; for here I first conceived the thought of this narration.

We were in this place at ease and by choice, and had no evils to suffer or to fear; yet the imaginations excited by the view of an unknown and untravelled wilderness are not such as arise in the artificial solitude of parks and gardens, a flattering notion of self-sufficiency, a placid indulgence of voluntary delusions, a secure expansion of the fancy, or a cool concentration of the mental powers. The phantoms which haunt a desert are want, and misery, and danger; the evils of dereliction rush upon the thoughts; man is made unwillingly acquainted with his own weakness, and meditation shows him only how little he can sustain, and how little he can perform. There were no traces of inhabitants, except a rude pile of clods called a summer hut, in which a herdsman had rested in the favourable seasons. Whoever had been in the place where I then sat, unprovided with provisions and ignorant of the country, might, at least before the roads were made, have wandered among the rocks till he had perished with hardship, before he could have found either food or shelter. Yet what are these hillocks to the ridges of Taurus,[†] or these spots of wildness to the deserts of America?

1775

meat food

Taurus mountain-range in Turkey

From LETTERS

To the Earl of Chesterfield[†]

65

My Lord

February 1755

I have been lately informed by the proprietor of *The World* that two papers in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When upon some slight encouragement I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered like the rest of mankind by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre* [the conqueror of the world's conqueror], but I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending, but I found my attendance so little encouraged that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could, and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, My Lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms or was repulsed from your door, during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.[†] Is not a patron, My Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water and when he has reached ground encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it, till I am solitary and cannot impart it, till I am known and do not want it.

I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligation where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should

Letter to Earl of Chesterfield Johnson felt that Chesterfield [q.v.] had neglected his early struggles on the *Dictionary*, only to associate himself with the completed work

rocks harsh and barren

35 consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less, for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, My Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,
Sam: Johnson

To James Macpherson[†]

Mr James Macpherson – I received your foolish and impudent note. Whatever insult is offered me I will do my best to repel, and what I cannot do for myself the law will do for me. I will not desist from detecting what I think a cheat from any fear of the menaces of a ruffian.

5 You want me to retract. What shall I retract? I thought your book an imposture from the beginning, I think it upon yet surer reasons an imposture still. For this opinion I give the public my reasons, which I here dare you to refute.

10 But however I may despise you, I reverence truth and if you can prove the genuineness of the work I will confess it. Your rage I defy, your abilities since your Homer[†] are not so formidable, and what I have heard of your morals disposes me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you can prove.

You may print this if you will.

Sam: Johnson

January 20, 1775

To the Revd William Dodd[†]

Dear Sir

That which is appointed for all men is now coming upon you. Outward circumstances, the eyes and the thoughts of men, are below the notice of an immortal being about to stand the trial for eternity before the Supreme Judge of heaven and earth. Be comforted: your crime, morally or religiously considered, has no very deep dye of

Letter to James Macpherson Johnson did not conceal his view that Macpherson (see p. 470) had invented, not translated from Gaelic, the poems of Ossian

Homer *Iliad* translation (1773)

Letter to Revd. William Dodd A leading clergyman, Dodd had forged a bond in the name of the 5th Earl of Chesterfield. He was duly hanged despite Johnson's intense campaign to save him

turpitude. It corrupted no man's principles; it attacked no man's life. It involved only a temporary and repairable injury. Of this, and of all other sins, you are earnestly to repent; and may God, who knoweth our frailty and desireth not our death, accept your repentance, for the sake of his Son JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

In requital of those well-intended offices[†] which you are pleased so emphatically to acknowledge, let me beg that you make in your devotions one petition for my eternal welfare.

I am, dear Sir, your affectionate servant,

Sam: Johnson

June 26, 1777

From PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS[†]

SEPT. 18. 1764 ABOUT 6. EVENING. This is my fifty-sixth birthday, the day on which I have concluded fifty-five years.

I have outlived many friends. I have felt many sorrows. I have made few improvements. Since my resolution formed last Easter, I have made no advancement in knowledge or in goodness; nor do I recollect that I have endeavoured it. I am dejected but not hopeless.

O God, for Jesus Christ's sake, have mercy upon me.

7 IN THE EVENING. I went to church, prayed to be loosed from the chain of my sins. . . . I am beset with scruples and troublesome thoughts.

10 I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving, having from the earliest time almost that I can remember been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing; the need of doing therefore is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolution for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

15 MARCH 30. EASTER DAY 1777 1^{ma} MANE.[†] The day is now come again in which, by a custom which since the death of my wife I have by the Divine assistance always observed, I am to renew the great covenant with my Maker and my Judge. I humbly hope to perform it better. I hope for more efficacy of resolution, and more diligence of endeavour. 20 When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time with some disorders of body, and disturbances of the mind very

offices Johnson's attentions
Prayers and Meditations These remains of
private papers, published after his death,
touchingly show Johnson's spiritual struggles

1^{ma} mane (Latin) one in the morning

near to madness; which I hope he that made me, will suffer to extenuate many faults, and excuse many deficiencies. Yet much remains to be repented and reformed. I hope that I refer more to God than in former times, and consider more what submission is due to his dispensations. But I have very little reformed my practical life, and the time in which I can struggle with habits cannot be now expected to be long. Grant, O God, that I may no longer resolve in vain, or dream away the life which thy indulgence gives me, in vacancy and uselessness.

1785

From THE LIVES OF THE POETS From 'Life of Cowley': The Metaphysical Poets

Cowley, like other poets who have written with narrow views and instead of tracing intellectual pleasure to its natural sources in the mind of man, paid their court to temporary prejudices, has been at one time too much praised and too much neglected at another.

5 Wit, like all other things subject by their nature to the choice of man, has its changes and fashions, and at different times takes different forms. About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical[†] poets, of whom in a criticism on the works of Cowley it is not improper to give some account.

10 The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour; but, unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; 15 for the modulation was so imperfect that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

If the father of criticism[†] has rightly denominated poetry τέχνη μμητικὴ, an imitative art, these writers will without great wrong lose their right to the name of poets, for they cannot be said to have imitated any thing: they neither copied nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter nor represented the operations of intellect.

Those however who deny them to be poets allow them to be wits. Dryden confesses of himself and his contemporaries that they fall below Donne in wit, but maintains that they surpass him in poetry.

metaphysical abstractly philosophical

father of criticism Aristotle in Poetics

25 If wit be well described by Pope[†] as being 'that which has been often
thought, but was never before so well expressed', they certainly never
attained nor ever sought it, for they endeavoured to be singular in their
thoughts, and were careless of their diction. But Pope's account of wit
is undoubtedly erroneous; he depresses it below its natural dignity, and
30 reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language.

If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered
as wit which is at once natural and new, that which though not obvious
is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that which
he that never found it wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the
35 metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new,
but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and
the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more
frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.

But wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more
40 rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*
[harmonious discord]; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery
of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined,
they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked
by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations,
45 comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety
surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly
bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

From this account of their compositions it will be readily inferred
that they were not successful in representing or moving the affections.
50 As they were wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising
they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment which enables us to
conceive and to excite the pains and the pleasure of other minds: they
never enquired what on any occasion they should have said or done,
but wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature; as
55 beings looking upon good and evil, impassive and at leisure; as
Epicurean[†] deities making remarks on the actions of men and the
vicissitudes of life, without interest and without emotion. Their courtship
was void of fondness and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was
only to say what they hoped had been never said before.

60 Nor was the sublime more within their reach than the pathetic; for
they never attempted that comprehension and expanse of thought which
at once fills the whole mind, and of which the first effect is sudden
astonishment, and the second rational admiration. Sublimity is produced
by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always

Pope *Essay on Criticism* l.298, loosely quoted
Epicurean Epicurus (341–279 bc): Greek
philosopher of pleasure in repose

65 general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in
descriptions not descending to minuteness. It is with great propriety
that subtlety, which in its original import means exility[†] of particles, is
taken in its metaphorical meaning for nicety of distinction. Those
writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of
greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation.
70 Their attempts were always analytic: they broke every image into
fragments, and could no more represent by their slender conceits and
laboured particularities the prospects of nature or the scenes of life than
he who dissects a sunbeam with a prism can exhibit the wide effluence
of a summer noon.

75 What they wanted however of the sublime they endeavoured to
supply by hyperbole;[†] their amplification had no limits: they left not
only reason but fancy behind them, and produced combinations of
confused magnificence that not only could not be credited, but could
80 not be imagined.

Yet great labour directed by great abilities is never wholly lost: if
they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise
sometimes struck out unexpected truth: if their conceits were far-
fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan it
was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a
85 metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer by descriptions
copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by
traditional imagery and hereditary similes, by readiness of rhyme and
volubility of syllables.

90 In perusing the works of this race of authors the mind is exercised
either by recollection or enquiry; either something already learned is to
be retrieved, or something new is to be examined. If their greatness
seldom elevates, their acuteness often surprises; if the imagination is
not always gratified, at least the powers of reflection and comparison
are employed; and in the mass of materials, which ingenious absurdity
95 has thrown together, genuine wit and useful knowledge may be
sometimes found, buried perhaps in grossness of expression, but useful
to those who know their value, and such as, when they are expanded
to perspicuity and polished to elegance, may give lustre to works which
100 have more propriety though less copiousness of sentiment.[†]

This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marino[†]
and his followers, had been recommended by the example of Donne, a
man of very extensive and various knowledge, and by Jonson, whose
manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of his lines
105 than in the cast of his sentiments. . . .

exility slenderness
hyperbole vast exaggeration

sentiment thought
Marino 1569–1625, Italian poet

From 'Life of Milton': Milton's Politics

His political notions were those of an acrimonious and surly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth. It is surely very shallow policy, that supposes money to be the chief good; and even this, without considering that the support and expense of a court is, for the most part, only a particular kind of traffic, by which money is circulated, without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected, that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character in domestic relations is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion. . . .

[*Lycidas*]

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is *Lycidas*; of which the diction is harsh,[†] the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing. What beauty there is we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of 'rough satyrs and fauns with cloven heel'. Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar,[†] and therefore disgusting;[†] whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction

harsh strained
vulgar commonplace

disgusting distasteful

on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours and the partner of his discoveries; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines!

We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.

We know that they never drove afield, and that they had no flocks to batten; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote that it is never sought because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks and corpses and flowers appear the heathen deities, Jove and Phoebus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a college easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge or less exercise invention than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping; and how one god asks another god what is become of *Lycidas*, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy; he who thus praises will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverent combinations. The shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful; but here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure had he not known its author. . . .

[*Paradise Lost*]

Those little pieces may be dispatched without much anxiety; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine *Paradise Lost*, a poem which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance the second, among the productions of the human mind.

By the general consent of critics, the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epic poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epic poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by

the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, must animate by dramatic energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation; morality must teach him the exact bounds and different shades of vice and virtue; from policy and the practice of life he has to learn the discriminations of character and the tendency of the passions, either single or combined; and physiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use is required an imagination capable of painting nature and realising fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase, and all the colours of words, and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.

Bossu[†] is of opinion that the poet's first work is to find a *moral*, which his fable is afterwards to illustrate and establish. This seems to have been the process only of Milton: the moral of other poems is incidental and consequent; in Milton's only it is essential and intrinsic. His purpose was the most useful and the most arduous: 'to vindicate[†] the ways of God to man'; to show the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law.

To convey this moral there must be a *fable*, a narration artfully constructed so as to excite curiosity and surprise expectation. In this part of his work Milton must be confessed to have equalled every other poet. He has involved in his account of the Fall of Man the events which preceded, and those that were to follow it: he has interwoven the whole system of theology with such propriety that every part appears to be necessary, and scarcely any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the progress of the main action.

The subject of an epic poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His subject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth; rebellion against the Supreme King raised by the highest order of created beings; the overthrow of their host and the punishment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures; their original happiness and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be hastened or retarded only by persons of elevated dignity. Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem all other greatness shrinks away. The weakest of his agents are the highest and

noblest of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whose actions the elements consented; on whose rectitude or deviation of will depended the state of terrestrial nature and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe.

55 Of the other agents in the poem the chief are such as it is irreverence to name on slight occasions. The rest were lower powers;

of which the least could wield
Those elements, and arm him with the force
Of all their regions;

60 powers which only the control of Omnipotence restrains from laying creation waste, and filling the vast expanse of space with ruin and confusion. To display the motives and actions of beings thus superior, so far as human reason can examine them or human imagination represent them, is the task which this mighty poet has undertaken and performed.

65 In the examination of epic poems much speculation is commonly employed upon the *characters*. The characters in the *Paradise Lost* which admit of examination are those of angels and of man; of angels good and evil, of man in his innocent and sinful state.

70 Among the angels the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may seem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel appear occasionally, and act as every incident requires; the solitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

75 Of the evil angels the characters are more diversified. To Satan, as Addison observes, such sentiments are given as suit 'the most exalted and most depraved being'. Milton has been censured by Clarke for the impiety which sometimes breaks from Satan's mouth. For there are thoughts, as he justly remarks, which no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly permit them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind. To make Satan speak as a rebel, without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination, was indeed one of the great difficulties in Milton's undertaking,

80 and I cannot but think that he has extricated himself with great happiness. There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.

85 The other chiefs of the celestial rebellion are very judiciously discriminated in the first and second books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council, with exact consistency.

Bossu French critic on epic (1675)
vindicate *Paradise Lost*, l.26 has 'justify . . .
men'

To Adam and to Eve are given during their innocence such sentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts are without luxury and their diligence without toil. Their addresses to their Maker have little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to ask, and innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation, and stubborn self-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last they seek shelter in his mercy, soften to repentance, and melt in supplication. Both before and after the Fall the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained.

Of the *probable* and the *marvellous*,[†] two parts of a vulgar epic poem which immerse the critic in deep consideration, the *Paradise Lost* requires little to be said. It contains the history of a miracle, of Creation and Redemption; it displays the power and the mercy of the Supreme Being: the probable therefore is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The substance of the narrative is truth; and as truth allows no choice, it is, like necessity, superior to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to every thing human, some slight exceptions may be made. But the main fabric is immovably supported.

It is justly remarked by Addison that this poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage above all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and to Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves.

Of the *machinery*,[†] so called from *θεός ἀπὸ μηχανῆς* [god from the machine], by which is meant the occasional interposition of supernatural power, another fertile topic of critical remarks, here is no room to speak, because every thing is done under the immediate and visible direction of Heaven; but the rule is so far observed that no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means. . . .

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the progress are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind might be said to sublimate[†] his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts.

He had considered creation in its whole extent, and his descriptions are therefore learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and his conceptions therefore were extensive. The character-

marvellous 'exceeding natural power'
(Johnson)

machinery a feature of Greek drama
sublimate purify by heat

istic quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantic loftiness. He can please when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful: he therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature and the occurrences of life did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven.

But he could not be always in other worlds: he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind he gives delight by its fertility.

Whatever be his subject he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw nature, as Dryden expresses it, 'through the spectacles of books'; and on most occasions calls learning to his assistance. . . .

The defects and faults of *Paradise Lost*, for faults and defects every work of man must have, it is the business of impartial criticism to discover. As in displaying the excellence of Milton I have not made long quotations, because of selecting beauties there had been no end, I shall in the same general manner mention that which seems to deserve censure; for what Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish in some degree the honour of our country? . . .

The plan of *Paradise Lost* has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged, beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effects of Adam's disobedience; we all sin like Adam, and like him must all bewail our offences; we have restless

and insidious enemies in the fallen angels, and in the blessed spirits we have guardians and friends; in the Redemption of mankind we hope to be included: in the description of heaven and hell we are surely interested, as we are all to reside hereafter either in the regions of horror or of bliss.

But these truths are too important to be new: they have been taught to our infancy; they have mingled with our solitary thoughts and familiar conversation, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being therefore not new they raise no unaccustomed emotion in the mind: what we knew before we cannot learn; what is not unexpected cannot surprise.

Of the ideas suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence, except when stated hours require their association; and from others we shrink with horror or admit them only as salutary inflictions, as counterpoises to our interests and passions. Such images rather obstruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleasure and terror are indeed the genuine sources of poetry; but poetical pleasure must be such as human strength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths however may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himself. Whoever considers the few radical¹ positions which the Scriptures afforded him will wonder by what energetic operations he expanded them to such extent and ramified them to so much variety, restrained as he was by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction.

Here is a full display of the united force of study and genius; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgement to digest and fancy to combine them: Milton was able to select from nature or from story, from ancient fable or from modern science, whatever could illustrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by study and exalted by imagination.

It has been therefore said without an indecent hyperbole by one of his encomiasts, that in reading *Paradise Lost* we read a book of universal knowledge.

But original deficiency cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. *Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever

radical basic (the Genesis account is brief)

wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master, and seek for companions. . . .

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *diction*, a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer, and which is so far removed from common use that an unlearned reader when he first opens his book finds himself surprised by a new language.

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. 'Our language,' says Addison, 'sunk under him.' But the truth is, that both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantic principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned, for there judgement operates freely, neither softened by the beauty nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and a nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration. . . .

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the 'lapidary² style'; has neither the easiness of prose nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme whom Milton alleges as precedents not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence has been confuted by the ear.

But whatever the advantage of rhyme I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymist, for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet like other heroes he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing may write blank verse, but those that hope only to please must condescend to rhyme.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epic poem, and therefore owes reverence to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention.

But of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities and disdainful of help or hindrance; he did not refuse admission

lapidary monumental

to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified or favour gained, no exchange of praise nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance and in blindness, but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous; and his work is not the greatest of heroic poems, only because it is not the first.

From 'Life of Pope': Comparison with Dryden

Of his intellectual character the constituent and fundamental principle was good sense, a prompt and intuitive perception of consonance¹ and propriety. He saw immediately, of his own conceptions, what was to be chosen, and what to be rejected; and, in the works of others, what was to be shunned, and what was to be copied.

But good sense alone is a sedate and quiescent quality, which manages its possessions well, but does not increase them; it collects few materials for its own operations, and preserves safety, but never gains supremacy. Pope had likewise genius; a mind active, ambitious, and adventurous, always investigating, always aspiring; in its widest searches still longing to go forward, in its highest flights still wishing to be higher; always imagining something greater than it knows, always endeavouring more than it can do.

To assist these powers he is said to have had great strength and exactness of memory. That which he had heard or read was not easily lost; and he had before him not only what his own meditation suggested, but what he had found in other writers that might be accommodated to his present purpose.

These benefits of nature he improved by incessant and unwearied diligence; he had recourse to every source of intelligence, and lost no opportunity of information; he consulted the living as well as the dead; he read his compositions to his friends, and was never content with mediocrity when excellence could be attained. He considered poetry as the business of his life, and, however he might seem to lament his occupation, he followed it with constancy: to make verses was his first labour, and to mend them was his last.

From his attention to poetry he was never diverted. If conversation offered anything that could be improved he committed it to paper; if a thought, or perhaps an expression more happy than was common, rose

30 to his mind, he was careful to write it; an independent distich¹ was preserved for an opportunity of insertion, and some little fragments have been found containing lines, or parts of lines, to be wrought upon at some other time.

35 He was one of those few whose labour is their pleasure, he was never elevated to negligence, nor wearied to impatience; he never passed a fault unamended by indifference, nor quitted it by despair. He laboured his works first to gain reputation, and afterwards to keep it.

Of composition there are different methods. Some employ at once memory and invention, and, with little intermediate use of the pen, form and polish large masses by continued meditation, and write their productions only when, in their own opinion, they have completed them. It is related of Virgil that his custom was to pour out a great number of verses in the morning, and pass the day in retrenching exuberances and correcting inaccuracies. The method of Pope, as may be collected from his translation, was to write his first thoughts in his first words, and gradually to amplify, decorate, rectify, and refine them.

45 With such faculties and such dispositions he excelled every other writer in *poetical prudence*; he wrote in such a manner as might expose him to few hazards. He used almost always the same fabric¹ of verse; and, indeed, by those few essays which he made of any other, he did not enlarge his reputation. Of this uniformity the certain consequence was readiness and dexterity. By perpetual practice language had in his mind a systematical arrangement; having always the same use for words, he had words so selected and combined as to be ready at his call. This increase of facility he confessed himself to have perceived in the progress of his translation.

55 But what was yet of more importance, his effusions were always voluntary, and his subjects chosen by himself. His independence secured him from drudging at a task, and labouring upon a barren topic: he never exchanged praise for money, nor opened a shop of condolence or congratulation. His poems, therefore, were scarce ever temporary. He suffered coronations and royal marriages to pass without a song, and derived no opportunities from recent events, nor any popularity from the accidental disposition of his readers. He was never reduced to the necessity of soliciting the sun to shine upon a birthday, of calling the Graces and Virtues to a wedding, or of saying what multitudes have said before him. When he could produce nothing new, he was at liberty to be silent.

65 His publications were for the same reason never hasty. He is said to have sent nothing to the press till it had lain two years under his inspection: it is at least certain that he ventured nothing without nice

consonance harmony

distich verse couplet

same fabric heroic couplets

examination. He suffered the tumult of imagination to subside, and the novelties of invention to grow familiar. He knew that the mind is always enamoured of its own productions, and did not trust his first fondness. 75 He consulted his friends, and listened with great willingness to criticism; and, what was of more importance, he consulted himself, and let nothing pass against his own judgement.

He professed to have learned his poetry from Dryden, whom, whenever an opportunity was presented, he praised through his whole life with unvaried liberality; and perhaps his character may receive 80 some illustration if he be compared with his master.

Integrity of understanding and nicety of discernment were not allotted in a less proportion to Dryden than to Pope. The rectitude of Dryden's mind was sufficiently shown by the dismissal of his poetical prejudices, and the rejection of unnatural thoughts and rugged numbers. But 85 Dryden never desired to apply all the judgement that he had. He wrote, and professed to write, merely for the people; and when he pleased others, he contented himself. He spent no time in struggles to rouse latent powers; he never attempted to make that better which was already good, nor often to mend what he must have known to be faulty. 90 He wrote, as he tells us, with very little consideration; when occasion or necessity called upon him, he poured out what the present moment happened to supply, and, when once it had passed the press, ejected it from his mind; for when he had no pecuniary interest, he had no further solicitude.

Pope was not content to satisfy; he desired to excel, and therefore always endeavoured to do his best: he did not court the candour, but dared the judgement of his reader, and, expecting no indulgence from others, he showed none to himself. He examined lines and words with 100 minute and punctilious observation, and retouched every part with indefatigable diligence, till he had left nothing to be forgiven.

For this reason he kept his pieces very long in his hands, while he considered and reconsidered them. The only poems which can be supposed to have been written with such regard to the times as might hasten their publication were the two satires of *Thirty-eight*,[†] of which Dodsley[†] told me that they were brought to him by the author that they might be fairly copied. 'Almost every line,' he said, 'was then written twice over; I gave him a clean transcript, which he sent some time afterwards to me for the press, with almost every line written twice 110 over a second time.'

His declaration that his care for his works ceased at their publication was not strictly true. His parental attention never abandoned them;

Thirty-eight known as *The Epilogue to the Satires* Dodsley Robert Dodsley (1703–64), publisher

what he found amiss in the first edition, he silently corrected in those that followed. He appears to have revised the *Iliad*, and freed it from some of its imperfections; and the *Essay on Criticism* received many improvements after its first appearance. It will seldom be found that he altered without adding clearness, elegance, or vigour. Pope had perhaps the judgement of Dryden; but Dryden certainly wanted the diligence of Pope. 115

In acquired knowledge the superiority must be allowed to Dryden, whose education was more scholastic, and who before he became an author had been allowed more time for study, with better means of information. His mind has a larger range, and he collects his images and illustrations from a more extensive circumference of science. Dryden knew more of man in his general nature, and Pope in his local manners. 120 The notions of Dryden were formed by comprehensive speculation, and those of Pope by minute attention. There is more dignity in the knowledge of Dryden, and more certainty in that of Pope.

Poetry was not the sole praise of either, for both excelled likewise in prose; but Pope did not borrow his prose from his predecessor. The style of Dryden is capricious and varied, that of Pope is cautious and uniform; Dryden obeys the motions of his own mind, Pope constrains his mind to his own rules of composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the varied exuberance of abundant vegetation; Pope's is a velvet lawn, shaven by the scythe, and levelled by the roller. 130

Of genius, that power which constitutes a poet; that quality without which judgement is cold and knowledge is inert; that energy which collects, combines, amplifies, and animates – the superiority must, with some hesitation, be allowed to Dryden. It is not to be inferred that of this poetical vigour Pope had only a little, because Dryden had more, for every other writer since Milton must give place to Pope; and even of Dryden it must be said that if he has brighter paragraphs, he has not better poems. Dryden's performances were always hasty, either excited by some external occasion, or extorted by domestic necessity; he composed without consideration, and published without correction. 140 What his mind could supply at call, or gather in one excursion, was all that he sought, and all that he gave. The dilatory caution of Pope enabled him to condense his sentiments, to multiply his images, and to accumulate all that study might produce, or chance might supply. If the flights of Dryden therefore are higher, Pope continues longer on the wing. If of Dryden's fire the blaze is brighter, of Pope's the heat is more regular and constant. Dryden often surpasses expectation, and Pope never falls below it. Dryden is read with frequent astonishment, and Pope with perpetual delight. 155

This parallel will, I hope, when it is well considered, be found just; and if the reader should suspect me, as I suspect myself, of some partial fondness for the memory of Dryden, let him not too hastily condemn me; for meditation and enquiry may, perhaps, show him the reasonableness of my determination. . . .

New sentiments and new images others may produce, but to attempt any further improvement of versification will be dangerous. Art and diligence have now done their best, and what shall be added will be the effort of tedious toil and needless curiosity.

After all this it is surely superfluous to answer the question¹ that has once been asked, 'Whether Pope was a poet?' otherwise than by asking in return, 'If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?' To circumscribe poetry by a definition will only show the narrowness of the definer, though a definition which shall exclude Pope will not easily be made. Let us look round upon the present time, and back upon the past; let us enquire to whom the voice of mankind has decreed the wreath of poetry; let their productions be examined and their claims stated, and the pretensions of Pope will be no more disputed. Had he given the world only his version the name of poet must have been allowed him; if the writer of the *Iliad* were to class his successors he would assign a very high place to his translator, without requiring any other evidence of genius.

From 'Life of Gray': Gray's Poetry

Gray's poetry is now to be considered, and I hope not to be looked on as an enemy to his name if I confess that I contemplate it with less pleasure than his life. . . .

The poem on the Cat was doubtless by its author considered as a trifle, but it is not a happy trifle. In the first stanza 'the azure flowers that blow' show resolutely a rhyme is sometimes made when it cannot easily be found. Selima, the Cat, is called a nymph, with some violence both to language and sense; but there is good use made of it when it is done; for of the two lines,

10 What female heart can gold despise?
 What cat's averse to fish?

the first relates merely to the nymph, and the second only to the cat. The sixth stanza contains a melancholy truth, that 'a favourite has no friend', but the last ends in a pointed sentence of no relation to the

the question raised in Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope* (Vol. 1, 1756)

15 purpose; if what glistened had been 'gold', the cat would not have gone into the water; and, if she had, would not less have been drowned.

The *Prospect of Eton College* suggests nothing to Gray which every beholder does not equally think and feel. His supplication to Father Thames to tell him who drives the hoop or tosses the ball is useless and puerile. Father Thames has no better means of knowing than himself. His epithet 'buxom health' is not elegant; he seems not to understand the word. Gray thought his language more poetical as it was more remote from common use: finding in Dryden 'honey redolent of Spring', an expression that reaches the utmost limits of our language, Gray drove it a little more beyond common apprehension, by making 'gales' to be 'redolent of joy and youth'. . . .

My process has now brought me to the 'Wonderful Wonder of Wonders', the two Sister Odes; by which, though either vulgar ignorance or common sense at first universally rejected them, many have been since persuaded to think themselves delighted. I am one of those that are willing to be pleased, and therefore would gladly find the meaning of the first stanza of *The Progress of Poetry*. . . .

To select a singular event, and swell it to a giant's bulk by fabulous appendages of spectres and predictions, has little difficulty, for he that forsakes the probable may always find the marvellous. And it has little use: we are affected only as we believe; we are improved only as we find something to be imitated or declined. I do not see that *The Bard* promotes any truth, moral or political.

His stanzas are too long, especially his epodes; the ode is finished before the ear has learned its measures, and consequently before it can receive pleasure from their consonance and recurrence.

Of the first stanza the abrupt beginning has been celebrated; but technical beauties can give praise only to the inventor. It is in the power of any man to rush abruptly upon his subject that has read the ballad of *Johnny Armstrong*.

Is there ever a man in all Scotland —.

The initial resemblances, or alliterations, 'ruin', 'ruthless', 'helm nor hauberck', are below the grandeur of a poem that endeavours at sublimity.

10 In the second stanza the Bard is well described; but in the third we have the puerilities of obsolete mythology. When we are told that Cadwallo 'hushed the stormy main', and that Modred 'made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-topped head', attention recoils from the repetition of a tale that, even when it was first heard, was heard with scorn.

55 The 'weaving' of the 'winding sheet' he borrowed, as he owns, from the northern Bards; but their texture, however, was very properly the

work of female powers, as the art of spinning the thread of life in another mythology. Theft is always dangerous; Gray has made weavers of his slaughtered bards by a fiction outrageous and incongruous. They are then called upon to 'Weave the warp, and weave the woof' perhaps with no great propriety; for it is by crossing the woof with the warp that men weave the web or piece; and the first line was dearly bought by the admission of its wretched correspondent, 'Give ample room and verge enough'. He has, however, no other line as bad.

The third stanza of the second ternary[†] is commended, I think, beyond its merit. The personification is indistinct. Thirst and Hunger are not alike, and their features, to make the imagery perfect, should have been discriminated. We are told, in the same stanza, how 'towers' are 'fed'. But I will no longer look for particular faults; yet let it be observed that the ode might have been concluded with an action of better example: but suicide is always to be had without expense of thought.

These odes are marked by glittering accumulations of ungraceful ornaments: they strike, rather than please; the images are magnified by affectation; the language is laboured into harshness. The mind of the writer seems to work with unnatural violence. 'Double, double, toil and trouble.'[†] He has a kind of strutting dignity, and is tall by walking on tiptoe. His art and his struggle are too visible, and there is too little appearance of ease and nature.

To say that he has no beauties would be unjust: a man like him, of great learning and great industry, could not but produce something valuable. When he pleases least, it can be said that a good design was ill directed.

His translations of Northern and Welsh Poetry deserve praise: the imagery is preserved, perhaps often improved; but the language is unlike the language of other poets.

In the character of his *Elegy* I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours. The *Churchyard* abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo. The four stanzas beginning 'Yet even these bones' are to me original: I have never seen the notions in any other place; yet he that reads them here persuades himself that he has always felt them. Had Gray written often thus it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him.

1779-81

ternary group of three

[†]'Double . . . trouble' *Macbeth*, IV.i.10

TO SIR JOHN LADE, ON HIS COMING OF AGE[†]

(A SHORT SONG OF CONGRATULATION)

Long-expected one and twenty
Lingering year at last is flown,
Pomp and pleasure, pride and plenty,
Great Sir John, are all your own.

5 Loosened from the minor's tether,
Free to mortgage or to sell,
Wild as wind, and light as feather,
Bid the slaves of thrift farewell.

10 Call the Bettys, Kates, and Jennys,
Every name that laughs at care,
Lavish of your grandsire's guineas,
Show the spirit of an heir.

15 All that prey on vice and folly
Joy to see their quarry fly,
Here the gamester light and jolly,
There the lender grave and sly.

20 Wealth, Sir John, was made to wander,
Let it wander as it will;
See the jockey, see the pander,
Bid them come, and take their fill.

When the bonny blade carouses,
Pockets full, and spirits high,
What are acres? What are houses?
Only dirt, or wet or dry.

25 If the guardian or the mother
Tell the woes of wilful waste,
Scorn their counsel and their pother,
You can hang or drown at last.

1780

To Sir John Lade Lade did indeed squander the inheritance he had just come into, and married the former mistress of a notorious highwayman; but he lived into old age

ON THE DEATH OF DR ROBERT LEVET[†]

Condemned to hope's delusive mine,
As on we toil from day to day,
By sudden blasts, or slow decline,
Our social comforts drop away.

5 Well tried through many a varying year,
See Levett to the grave descend;
Officious, innocent, sincere,[†]
Of every friendless name the friend.

10 Yet still he fills affection's eye,
Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind;
Nor, lettered arrogance, deny
Thy praise to merit unrefined.

15 When fainting nature called for aid,
And hovering death prepared the blow,
His vigorous remedy displayed
The power of art without the show.

In misery's darkest caverns known,
His useful care was ever nigh,
Where hopeless anguish poured his groan,
20 And lonely want retired to die.

No summons mocked by chill delay,
No petty gain disdained by pride,
The modest wants of every day
The toil of every day supplied.

25 His virtues walked their narrow round,
Nor made a pause, nor left a void;
And sure th' Eternal Master found
The single talent[†] well employed.

On the Death of Dr Robert Levett Levett
(1705–82), a member of Johnson's strange
household, worked among the poor as an
unqualified physician

officious doing good offices; *sincere*: honest;
lettered: learned
single talent Jesus' parable (Matthew
25.14–30)

30 The busy day, the peaceful night,
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;
His frame was firm, his powers were bright,
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then with no throbbing fiery pain,
No cold gradations of decay,
35 Death broke at once the vital chain,
And freed his soul the nearest way.

1783

Laurence Sterne

1713–68

Sterne was born in Ireland, the son of an army ensign, but lived in England after 1723. After Jesus College, Cambridge, he was ordained in the Church of England, holding a Yorkshire living from 1738, and marrying. Nearly twenty years later, he wrote *A Political Romance* (1759), a satire on local church politics, and began his novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, the first two volumes of which were published at York in 1759. From 1760, Sterne was lionised in London society as his eccentric fiction created a sensation: nine volumes were published at intervals until 1767. He published his sermons, and travelled in France (1762–4; and, with Italy, 1765). Always an admirer of women, and now physically apart from his wife, he marked his 'separation' from a new love, Mrs Draper, in the unpublished *Journal to Eliza*. His continental experience was used in *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768), from which the cultivation of emotional experience was widely imitated. *Tristram Shandy*, an extraordinary blend of traditional learning and technical innovation, wittily parodies as a precursor of modernism the conventions of the new novel form: although it does have action and characters, it disrupts narrative chronology, jumping to digressions through associations of ideas; the ineffectual narrator-hero is not born until Volume III; the reader is constantly made aware of the physical book.) Sterne's pathos and wit, combined with a vein of sexual innuendo often thought unsuitable for a clergyman, make the novel unique. The extracts preserve the original's typographical eccentricity.

From TRISTRAM SHANDY

Volume 1

CHAPTER I [*Begetting*]

I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they

were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing; – that not only the production of a rational Being was concern'd in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind; – and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours[†] and dispositions which were then uppermost: – Had they duly weigh'd and consider'd all this, and proceeded accordingly, – I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me. – Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it; – you have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits,[†] as how they are transfused from father to son, &c. &c. – and a great deal to that purpose: – Well, you may take my word, that nine parts in ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his success and miscarriages in this world depend upon their motions and activity, and the different tracks and trains you put them into; so that when they are once set a-going, whether right or wrong, 'tis not a halfpenny matter, – away they go clattering like hey-go-mad; and by treading the same steps over and over again, they presently make a road of it, as plain and as smooth as a garden walk which, when they are once used to, the Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it.

Pray, my dear, quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock? – Good G – I cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time, – *Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?* Pray, what was your father saying? – Nothing.

[Chapter Two explains that the question dispersed the animal spirits which should have safely conducted the spermatozoon]

CHAPTER III

To my uncle Mr *Toby Shandy* do I stand indebted for the preceding anecdote, to whom my father, who was an excellent natural philosopher,[†] and much given to close reasoning upon the smallest matters, had oft, and heavily, complain'd of the injury; but once more particularly, as my uncle *Toby* well remember'd, upon his observing a most unaccount-

<i>humours</i>	traditionally, human temperament	<i>animal spirits</i>	traditional bodily source of
	dependent on the relationship in the body		sensation and motion
	between the elements of phlegm, blood, cholera, melancholy	<i>natural philosopher</i>	student of natural phenomena, scientist

35 table obliquity, (as he call'd it) in my manner of setting up my top, and justifying the principles upon which I had done it, — the old gentleman shook his head, and in a tone more expressive by half of sorrow than reproach, — he said his heart all along foreboded, and he saw it verified in this, and from a thousand other observations he had made upon me, That I should neither think nor act like any other man's child: — *But alas!* continued he, shaking his head a second time, and wiping away a tear which was trickling down his cheeks, *My Tristram's misfortunes began nine months before ever he came into the world.*

40 — My mother, who was sitting by, look'd up, — but she knew no more than her backside what my father meant, — but my uncle, Mr *Toby Shandy*, who had been often informed of the affair, — understood him very well.

CHAPTER IV

I know there are readers in the world, as well as many other good people in it, who are no readers at all, — who find themselves ill at ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last, of every thing which concerns you.

50 It is in pure compliance with this humour of theirs, and from a backwardness in my nature to disappoint any one soul living, that I have been so very particular already. As my life and opinions are likely to make some noise in the world, and, if I conjecture right, will take in all ranks, professions, and denominations of men whatever, — be no less read than the *Pilgrim's Progress* itself — and, in the end, prove the very thing which *Montaigne* dreaded his essays should turn out, that is, a book for a parlour-window; — I find it necessary to consult every one a little in his turn; and therefore must beg pardon for going on a little further in the same way: For which cause, right glad I am, that I have begun the history of myself in the way I have done; and that I am able to go on tracing every thing in it, as *Horace*¹ says, *ab Ovo*.

60 *Horace*, I know, does not recommend this fashion altogether: But that gentleman is speaking only of an epic poem or a tragedy; — (I forget which) — besides, if it was not so, I should beg Mr *Horace's* pardon; — for in writing what I have set about, I shall confine myself neither to his rules, not to any man's rules that ever lived.

70 To such, however, as do not choose to go so far back into these things, I can give no better advice, than that they skip over the remaining

Horace his *Art of Poetry* praised Homer for not starting to relate the Trojan War from the egg which produced Helen, cause of the war

part of this Chapter; for I declare before hand, 'tis wrote only for the curious and inquisitive.

Shut the door.

75 I was begot in the night, betwixt the first *Sunday* and the first *Monday* in the month of *March*, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighteen. I am positive I was. — But how I came to be so very particular in my account of a thing which happened before I was born, is owing to another small anecdote known only in our own family, but now made public for the better clearing up this point.

80 My father, you must know, who was originally a *Turkey* merchant, but had left off business for some years, in order to retire to, and die upon, his paternal estate in the county of —, was, I believe, one of the most regular men in every thing he did, whether 'twas matter of business, or matter of amusement, that ever lived. As a small specimen of this extreme exactness of his, to which he was in truth a slave, — he had made it a rule for many years of his life, — on the first *Sunday night* of every month throughout the whole year, — as certain as ever the *Sunday night* came, — to wind up a large house-clock which we had standing upon the back-stairs head, with his own hands: — And being somewhere between fifty and sixty years of age, at the time I have been speaking of, — he had likewise gradually brought some other little family concerns to the same period, in order, as he would often say to my uncle *Toby*, to get them all out of the way at one time, and be no more plagued and pester'd with them the rest of the month.

95 It was attended but with one misfortune, which, in a great measure, fell upon myself, and the effects of which I fear I shall carry with me to my grave; namely, that, from an unhappy association of ideas which have no connection in nature, it so fell out at length, that my poor mother could never hear the said clock wound up, — the thoughts of some other things unavoidably popp'd into her head, — & *vice versa*: — which strange combination of ideas, the sagacious *Locke*,[†] who certainly understood the nature of these things better than most men, affirms to have produced more wry actions than all other sources of prejudice whatsoever.

100 But this by the bye.

105 Now it appears, by a memorandum in my father's pocket-book, which now lies upon the table, 'That on *Lady-Day*,[†] which was on the 25th of the same month in which I date my geniture, — my father set out upon his journey to *London* with my eldest brother *Bobby*, to fix him at *Westminster* school;' and, as it appears from the same authority,

110

Locke his theory of the association of ideas in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) influenced the bold narrative jumps in Sterne's novel (see Vol. 2, Chap. 8 below)

Lady-Day 25 March, feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary

'That he did not get down to his wife and family till the *second week* in *May* following,' – it brings the thing almost to a certainty. However, what follows in the beginning of the next chapter puts it beyond all possibility of doubt.

115 – But pray, Sir, What was your father doing all *December*, – *January*, and *February*? – Why, Madam, – he was all that time afflicted with a Sciatica.[†]

[Tristram returns from a series of digressions into his uncle's military career]

Volume 2

CHAPTER VIII [Time and Distance]

It is about an hour and a half's tolerable good reading since my uncle *Toby* rung the bell, when *Obadiah* was order'd to saddle a horse, and go for Dr *Slop*, the man-midwife; – so that no one can say, with reason, that I have not allowed *Obadiah* time enough, poetically speaking, and considering the emergency too, both to go and come; – tho', morally and truly speaking, the man, perhaps, has scarce had time to get on his boots.

5 If the hypercritick[†] will go upon this; and is resolved after all to take a pendulum, and measure the true distance betwixt the ringing of the bell and the rap at the door; – and, after finding it to be no more than two minutes, thirteen seconds, and three fifths, – should take upon him to insult over me for such a breach in the unity, or rather probability, of time; – I would remind him, that the idea of duration[†] and of its simple modes, is got merely from the train and succession of our ideas, – and is the true scholastick pendulum, – and by which, as a scholar, I will be tried in this matter, – abjuring and detesting the jurisdiction of all other pendulums whatever.

15 I would, therefore, desire him to consider that it is but poor eight miles from *Shandy-Hall* to Dr *Slop*, the man-midwife's house; – and that whilst *Obadiah* has been going those said miles and back, I have brought my uncle *Toby* from *Namur*,[†] quite across all *Flanders*, into *England*: – That I have had him ill upon my hands near four years; – and have since travelled him and Corporal *Trim*, in a chariot and four, a journey of near two hundred miles down into *Yorkshire*; – all which
25 put together, must have prepared the reader's imagination for the

Sciatica inflamed thigh-nerve
hypercritick excessively critical person
idea of duration Tristram contrasts mechanical time with our subjective experience of it, which is flexible

Namur where Toby was wounded in the groin (1695) during the French wars

entrance of Dr *Slop* upon the stage, – as much, at least, (I hope) as a dance, a song, or a concerto between the acts.

30 If my hypercritick is intractable, – alledging, that two minutes and thirteen seconds are no more than two minutes and thirteen seconds, – when I have said all I can about them; – and that this plea, tho' it might save me dramatically, will damn me biographically, rendering my book, from this very moment, a profess'd ROMANCE,[†] which, before, was a book apocryphal:[†] – If I am thus pressed – I then put an end to the whole objection and controversy about it all at once, – by acquainting him, that *Obadiah* had not got above threescore yards from the stable-yard before he met with Dr *Slop*; – and indeed he gave a dirty proof that he had met with him, – and was within an ace of giving a tragical one too.

Imagine to yourself; – but this had better begin a new chapter.

Volume 2

CHAPTER XII [Hobby-Horse]

Your sudden and unexpected arrival, quoth my uncle *Toby*, addressing himself to Dr *Slop*, (all three of them sitting down to the fire together, as my uncle *Toby* began to speak) – instantly brought the great *Stevinus* into my head, who, you must know, is a favourite author with me. – Then added my father, making use of the argument *Ad Crumenam*,[†] – I will lay twenty guineas to a single crown piece, (which will serve to give away to *Obadiah* when he gets back) that this name *Stevinus* was some engineer or other, – or has wrote something or other, either directly or indirectly, upon the science of fortification.[†]

10 He has so, – replied my uncle *Toby*. – I knew it, said my father; – tho', for the soul of me, I cannot see what kind of connection there can be betwixt Dr *Slop*'s sudden coming, and a discourse upon fortification; – yet I fear'd it. – Talk of what we will, brother, – or let the occasion be never so foreign or unfit for the subject, – you are sure to bring it in: I would not, brother *Toby*, continued my father, – I declare I would not have my head so full of curtains and horn-works. – That, I dare say, you would not, quoth Dr *Slop*, interrupting him, and laughing most immoderately at his pun.[†]

Dennis the critick could not detest and abhor a pun, or the insinuation

Romance absurd fiction
apocryphal of doubtful authority
Ad Crumenam to the purse
fortification Toby is obsessed with recreating

in the bowling-green the military building from France
pun the military terms also suggest sex

20 of a pun, more cordially than my father; – he would grow testy upon it at any time; – but to be broke in upon by one, in a serious discourse, was as bad, he would say, as a flip upon the nose; – he saw no difference.

25 Sir, quoth my uncle Toby, addressing him to Dr Slop, – the curtains my brother *Shandy* mentions here, have nothing to do with bed-steads; – tho', I know, *Du Cange* says, 'That bed-curtains, in all probability, have taken their name from them;' – nor have the horn-works, he speaks of, any thing in the world to do with the horn-works of cuckoldom: – But the *curtin*, Sir, is the word we use in fortification, for that part of the wall or rampart which lies between the two bastions and joins them. – Besiegers seldom offer to carry on their attacks directly against the curtain, for this reason, because they are so well *flanked*; ('tis the case of other curtains, quoth Dr Slop, laughing) however, continued my uncle Toby, to make them sure, we generally choose to place ravelins before them, taking care only to extend them beyond the fossé or ditch: – The common men, who know very little of fortification, confound the ravelin and the half-moon together, – tho' they are very different things; – not in their figure or construction, for we make them exactly alike in all points; – for they always consist of two faces, making a salient angle, with the gorges, not straight, but in form of a crescent. – Where then lies the difference? (quoth my father, a little testily) – In their situations, answered my uncle Toby: – For when a ravelin, brother, stands before the curtain, it is a ravelin; and when a ravelin stands before a bastion, then the ravelin is not a ravelin; – it is a half-moon; a half-moon likewise is a half-moon, and no more, so long as it stands before its bastion; – but was it to change place, and get before the curtain, – 'twould be no longer a half-moon; a half-moon, in that case, is not a half-moon; – 'tis no more than a ravelin. – I think, quoth my father, that the noble science of defence has its weak sides, – as well as others.

50 – As for the horn-works (high! ho! sigh'd my father) which, continued my uncle Toby, my brother was speaking of, they are a very considerable part of an outwork; – they are called by the *French* engineers, *Ouvrage à corne*, and we generally make them to cover such places as we suspect to be weaker than the rest; – 'tis form'd by two epaulments or demi-bastions, – they are very pretty, and if you will take a walk, I'll engage to shew you one well worth your trouble. – I own, continued my uncle Toby, when we crown them, – they are much stronger, but then they are very expensive, and take up a great deal of ground; so that, in my opinion, they are most of use to cover or defend the head of a camp; otherwise the double tenaille – By the mother who bore us! – brother Toby, quoth my father, not able to hold out any longer, – you would provoke a saint; – here have you got us, I know not how, not only souse into the middle of the old subject again: – But so full is your

head of these confounded works, that tho' my wife is this moment in the pains of labour, – and you hear her cry out, – yet nothing will serve you but to carry off the man-midwife. – *Accoucheur*, – if you please, quoth Dr Slop. – With all my heart, replied my father, I don't care what they call you, – but I wish the whole science of fortification, with all its inventors, at the Devil; – it has been the death of thousands, – and it will be mine, in the end. – I would not, I would not, brother Toby, have my brains so full of saps, mines, blinds, gabions, palisades, ravelins, half-moons, and such trumpery, to be proprietor of *Namur*, and of all the towns in *Flanders* with it.

70 My uncle Toby was a man patient of injuries; – not from want of courage, – I have told you in the fifth chapter of this second book, 'That he was a man of courage:' – And will add here, that where just occasions presented, or called it forth, – I know no man under whose arm I would sooner have taken shelter; nor did this arise from any insensibility or obtuseness of his intellectual parts; – for he felt this insult of my father's as feelingly as a man could do; – but he was of a peaceful, placid nature, – no jarring element in it, – all was mix'd up so kindly within him; my uncle Toby had scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly.

80 – Go, – says he, one day at dinner, to an over-grown one which had buzz'd about his nose, and tormented him cruelly all dinner-time, – and which, after infinite attempts, he had caught at last, as it flew by him; – I'll not hurt thee, says my uncle Toby, rising from his chair, and going a-cross the room, with the fly in his hand, – I'll not hurt a hair of thy head: – Go, says he, lifting up the sash, and opening his hand as he spoke to let it escape; – go poor Devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee? – This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me.

90 I was but ten years old when this happened; – but whether it was, that the action itself was more in unison to my nerves at that age of pity, which instantly set my whole frame into one vibration of most pleasurable sensation; – or how far the manner and expression of it might go towards it; – or in what degree, or by what secret magick, – a tone of voice and harmony of movement, attuned by mercy, might find a passage to my heart, I know not; – this I know, that the lesson of universal good-will then taught and imprinted by my uncle Toby, has never since been worn out of my mind: And tho' I would not depreciate what the study of the *Literæ humaniores*,[†] at the university, have done for me in that respect, or discredit the other helps of an expensive education bestowed upon me, both at home and abroad

105 since; – yet I often think that I owe one half of my philanthropy to that one accidental impression.

☞ This is to serve for parents and governors instead of a whole volume upon the subject.

110 I could not give the reader this stroke in my uncle Toby's picture, by the instrument with which I drew the other parts of it, – that taking in no more than the mere HOBBY-HORSICAL likeness; – this is a part of his moral character. My father, in this patient endurance of wrongs, which I mention, was very different, as the reader must long ago have noted; he had a much more acute and quick sensibility of nature, attended with a little soreness of temper; tho' this never transported him to any thing which looked like malignancy; – yet, in the little rubs and vexations of life, 'twas apt to shew itself in a drollish and witty kind of peevishness: – He was, however, frank and generous in his nature, – at all times open to conviction; and in the little ebullitions of this subacid[†] humour towards others, but particularly towards my uncle Toby, whom he truly loved; – he would feel more pain, ten times told, (except in the affair of my aunt Dinah, or where an hypothesis was concerned) than what he ever gave.

125 The characters of the two brothers, in this view of them, reflected light upon each other, and appear'd with great advantage in this affair which arose about *Stevinus*.

I need not tell the reader, if he keeps a HOBBY-HORSE,[†] – that a man's HOBBY-HORSE is as tender a part as he has about him; and that these unprovoked strokes, at my uncle Toby's could not be unfelt by him. – No; – as I said above, my uncle Toby did feel them, and very sensibly too.

135 Pray, Sir, what said he? – How did he behave? – Oh, Sir! – it was great: For as soon as my father had done insulting his HOBBY-HORSE, – he turned his head, without the least emotion, from Dr Slop, to whom he was addressing his discourse, and look'd up into my father's face, with a countenance spread over with so much good nature; – so placid; – so fraternal; so inexpressibly tender towards him; – it penetrated my father to his heart: He rose up hastily from his chair, and seizing hold of both my uncle Toby's hands as he spoke: – Brother Toby, said he, – I beg thy pardon; – forgive, I pray thee, this rash humour which my mother gave me. – My dear, dear brother, answer'd my uncle Toby, rising up by my father's help, say no more about it; – you are heartily welcome, had it been ten times as much, brother. But 'tis ungenerous, replied my father, to hurt any man; – a brother worse; – but to hurt a brother of such gentle manners, – so unprovoking, – and so unresenting; – 'tis base: – By heaven, 'tis cowardly. – You are heartily

subacid rather sharp

hobby-horse cherished obsession

welcome, brother, quoth my uncle Toby, – had it been fifty times as much. – Besides, what have I to do, my dear Toby, cried my father, either with your amusements or your pleasures, unless it was in my power (which it is not) to increase their measure?

150 – Brother Shandy, answer'd my uncle Toby, looking wistfully in his face, – you are much mistaken in this point; for you do increase my pleasure very much, in begetting children for the Shandy Family at your time of life. – But, by that, Sir, quoth Dr Slop, Mr Shandy increases his own. – Not a jot, quoth my father.

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CHAPTER XIII

My brother does it, quoth my uncle Toby, out of principle. – In a family-way, I suppose, quoth Dr Slop. – Pshaw! – said my father, – 'tis not worth talking of.

1760–7

From A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY THROUGH FRANCE AND ITALY[†]

THE PULSE

PARIS

Hail ye small sweet courtesies of life, for smooth do ye make the road of it! like grace and beauty which beget inclinations to love at first sight; 'tis ye who open this door and let the stranger in.

5 – Pray, Madame,' said I, 'have the goodness to tell me which way I must turn to go to the Opera comique:' – 'Most willingly, Monsieur,' said she, laying aside her work –

I had given a cast with my eye into half a dozen shops as I came along in search of a face not likely to be disordered by such an interruption; till at last, this hitting my fancy, I had walked in.

10 She was working a pair of ruffles as she sat in a low chair on the far side of the shop facing the door –

A *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* The narrator, Parson Yorick (taken from *Tristram Shandy*), values moments of spiritual contact on his travels

‘— *Tres volentieres*; most willingly,’ said she, laying her work down upon a chair next her, and rising up from the low chair she was sitting in, with so cheerful a movement and so cheerful a look, that had I been laying out fifty louis d’ors with her, I should have said — ‘This woman is grateful.’

‘You must turn, Monsieur,’ said she, going with me to the door of the shop, and pointing the way down the street I was to take — ‘you must turn first to your left hand — *mais prenez garde* [take care] — there are two turns; and be so good as to take the second — then go down a little way and you’ll see a church, and when you are past it, give yourself the trouble to turn directly to the right, and that will lead you to the foot of the *pont neuf* [new bridge] which you must cross — and there, any one will do himself the pleasure to show you —’

She repeated her instructions three times over to me with the same good natured patience the third time as the first; — and if *tones and manners* have a meaning, which certainly they have, unless to hearts which shut them out — she seemed really interested, that I should not lose myself.

I will not suppose it was the woman’s beauty, notwithstanding she was the handsomest grisset,† I think, I ever saw, which had much to do with the sense I had of her courtesy; only I remember, when I told her how much I was obliged to her, that I looked very full in her eyes — and that I repeated my thanks as often as she had done her instructions.

I had not got ten paces from the door, before I found I had forgot every title of what she had said — so looking back, and seeing her still standing in the door of the shop as if to look whether I went right or not — I returned back, to ask her whether the first turn was to my right or left — for that I had absolutely forgot. — ‘Is it possible!’ said she, half laughing. — ‘Tis very possible,’ replied I, ‘when a man is thinking more of a woman, than of her good advice.’

As this was the real truth — she took it, as every woman takes a matter of right, with a slight courtesy.

‘— *Attendez!*’ said she, laying her hand upon my arm to detain me, whilst she called a lad out of the back-shop to get ready a parcel of gloves. ‘I am just going to send him,’ said she, ‘with a packet into that quarter, and if you will have the complaisance to step in, it will be ready in a moment, and he shall attend you to the place.’ — So I walked in with her to the far side of the shop, and taking up the ruffle in my hand which she laid upon the chair, as if I had a mind to sit, she sat down herself in her low chair, and I instantly sat myself down besides her.

‘— He will be ready, Monsieur,’ said she, ‘in a moment —’ ‘And in

grisset grey-clad milliner

that moment,’ replied I, ‘most willingly would I say something very civil to you for all these courtesies. Anyone may do a casual act of good nature, but a continuation of them shows it is a part of the temperature; and certainly,’ added I, ‘if it is the same blood which comes from the heart, which descends to the extremes (touching her wrist) I am sure you must have one of the best pulses of any woman in the world —’ ‘Feel it,’ said she, holding out her arm. So laying down my hat, I took hold of her fingers in one hand, and applied the two fore-fingers of my other to the artery —

— Would to heaven! my dear Eugenius,† thou hadst passed by, and beheld me sitting in my black coat, and in my lackadaisical manner, counting the throbs of it, one by one, with as much true devotion as if I had been watching the critical ebb or flow of her fever — How wouldst thou have laughed and moralised upon my new profession? — and thou shouldst have laughed and moralised on — Trust me, my dear Eugenius, I should have said, ‘there are worse occupations in this world *than feeling a woman’s pulse.*’ — ‘But a grisset’s!’ thou wouldst have said — ‘and in an open shop! Yorick —’

— So much the better: for when my views are direct, Eugenius, I care not if all the world saw me feel it.

THE HUSBAND

PARIS

I had counted twenty pulsations, and was going on fast towards the fortieth, when her husband coming unexpected from a back parlour into the shop put me a little out in my reckoning — ‘Twas no body but her husband, she said — so I began a fresh score — ‘Monsieur is so good,’ quoth she, ‘as he passed by us, as to give himself the trouble of feeling my pulse —’ The husband took off his hat, and making me a bow, said, I did him too much honour — and having said that, he put on his hat and walked out.

‘Good God!’ said I to myself, as he went out — ‘and can this man be the husband of this woman?’

Let it not torment the few who know what must have been the grounds of this exclamation, if I explain it to those who do not.

In London a shopkeeper and a shopkeeper’s wife seem to be one bone and one flesh: in the several endowments of mind and body, sometimes the one, sometimes the other has it, so as in general to be upon a par, and to tally with each other as nearly as man and wife need to do.

Eugenius ‘Yorick’s’ friend, also mentioned in *Tristram Shandy*

In Paris, there are scarce two orders of beings more different: for the legislative and executive powers of the shop not resting in the husband, he seldom comes there – in some dark and dismal room behind, he sits commerceless in his thrum^t night-cap, the same rough son of nature that nature left him.

The genius of a people where nothing but the monarchy is *salique*,^t having ceded this department, with sundry others, totally to the women – by a continual higgling with customers of all ranks and sizes from morning to night, like so many rough pebbles shook long together in a bag, by amicable collisions, they have worn down their asperities and sharp angles, and not only become round and smooth, but will receive, some of them, a polish like a brilliant – Monsieur *le Mari* [husband] is little better than the stone under your foot –

– Surely – surely man! it is not good for thee to sit alone – thou wast made for social intercourse and gentle greetings, and this improvement of our natures from it, I appeal to, as my evidence.

‘ – And how does it beat, Monsieur?’ said she. – ‘With all the benignity,’ said I, looking quietly in her eyes, ‘that I expected –’ She was going to say something civil in return – but the lad came into the shop with the gloves – ‘*A propos* [opportune],’ said I; ‘I want a couple of pair myself.’

THE GLOVES

The beautiful grisset rose up when I said this, and going behind the counter, reached down a parcel and untied it: I advanced to the side over-against her: they were all too large. The beautiful grisset measured them one by one across my hand – It would not alter the dimensions – She begged I would try a single pair, which seemed to be the least – She held it open – my hand slipped into it at once – ‘It will not do,’ said I, shaking my head a little – ‘No,’ said she, doing the same thing.

There are certain combined looks of simple subtlety – where whim, and sense, and seriousness, and nonsense, are so blended, that all the languages of Babel^t set loose together could not express them – they are communicated and caught so instantaneously, that you can scarce say which party is the infector. I leave it to your men of words to swell pages about it – it is enough in the present to say again, the gloves would not do; so folding our hands within our arms, we both lolled upon the counter – it was narrow, and there was just room for the parcel to lay between us.

^t*thrum* thread or canvas
^t*salique* law forbidding woman monarch

^t*Babel* place of confused languages (Genesis 11)

The beautiful grisset looked sometimes at the gloves, then sideways to the window, then at the gloves – and then at me. I was not disposed to break silence – I followed her example: so I looked at the gloves, then to the window, then at the gloves, and then at her – and so on alternately.

I found I lost considerably in every attack – she had a quick black eye, and shot through two such long and silken eye-lashes with such penetration, that she looked into my very heart and reins^t – It may seem strange, but I could actually feel she did –

‘ – It is no matter,’ said I, taking up a couple of the pairs next me, and putting them into my pocket.

I was sensible the beautiful grisset had not asked above a single livre^t above the price – I wished she had asked a livre more, and was puzzling my brains how to bring the matter about – ‘Do you think, my dear Sir,’ said she, mistaking my embarrassment, ‘that I could ask a *sous* too much of a stranger – and of a stranger whose politeness, more than his want of gloves, has done me the honour to lay himself at my mercy? – *M’en croyez capable?*’ – ‘Faith! not I,’ said I; ‘and if you were, you are welcome’ – So counting the money into her hand, and with a lower bow than one generally makes to a shopkeeper’s wife, I went out, and her lad with his parcel followed me.

^t*reins* kidneys (seat of emotion)

^t*livre* about a franc (a sou is much less)

Thomas Gray

1716–71

Gray was the son of a London scrivener. At Eton, he first met Horace Walpole (see below) with whom he travelled on the continent in 1739–41. Most of his adult life, apart from travels, was spent at Cambridge, where he moved in 1756 from Peterhouse to Pembroke. A bachelor and a quiet scholar, he declined the Poet Laureateship, but became Professor of Modern History (never lecturing). In contrast to professional writers, he published little of his slender output. His learning is seen in his attempts to recapture the sublime energy and drama of the Greek lyric poet, Pindar (fifth century BC), in the abruptness of the odes; elsewhere he shows the influence of the 'new' poetic material he found in Old Norse and Welsh, in contrast to the 'Augustan' tradition; but the common humanity of the *Elegy* has always had the widest appeal. Gray believed that 'the language of the age is never the language of poetry'; his styles are sophisticated and allusive. His interest in the picturesque led him on the new tourist route to Scotland and the Lake District. His letters are among the less formal and most attractive of the century. Johnson's criticism (see above) was highly controversial.

ODE ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF ETON COLLEGE†

Ye distant spires, ye antique towers,
That crown the watery glade,
Where grateful science† still adores
Her Henry's holy shade;
And ye that from the stately brow
Of Windsor's heights th' expanse below

Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College

Within the previous fifteen months, Gray had quarrelled with Walpole, and had suffered the death of another Eton friend, Richard West. The physical situation of the school across the river from Windsor Castle,

and its foundation by King Henry VI in 1440, provide Gray's starting-point. A Greek epigraph said: 'I am a man, reason enough for being unhappy' science learning in general

Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey,
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
Wanders the hoary Thames along
His silver-winding way.

Ah, happy hills, ah, pleasing shade,
Ah, fields beloved in vain,
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales, that from ye blow,
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to soothe,
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring.

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race
Disporting on thy margin* green
The paths of pleasure trace,
Who foremost now delight to cleave
With pliant arm thy glassy wave?
The captive linnet which enthral?†
What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed,
Or urge the flying ball?

While some on earnest business bent
Their murmuring labours ply
'Gainst graver hours, that bring constraint
To sweeten liberty:

Some bold adventurers disdain
The limits of their little reign,
And unknown regions dare descry:
Still as they run they look behind,
They hear a voice in every wind,
And snatch a fearful joy.

Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed,
Less pleasing when possessed;
The tear forgot as soon as shed,
The sunshine of the breast:

enthral hold in bondage

brink

45 Theirs buxom health of rosy hue,
Wild wit, invention ever-new,
And lively cheer of vigour born;
The thoughtless day, the easy night,
The spirits pure, the slumbers light,
That fly th' approach of morn.

Alas, regardless of their doom
The little victims play!
No sense have they of ills to come,
Nor care beyond today:
Yet see how all around 'em wait
The ministers[†] of human fate,
And black misfortune's baleful train!
Ah, show them, where in ambush stand
To seize their prey the murderous band!
Ah, tell them, they are men!

These shall the fury passions tear,
The vultures of the mind,
Disdainful anger, pallid fear,
And shame that skulks behind;
Or pining love shall waste their youth,
Or jealousy with rankling tooth,
That inly gnaws the secret heart,
And envy wan, and faded care,
Grim-visaged comfortless despair,
And sorrow's piercing dart.

Ambition this shall tempt to rise,
Then whirl the wretch from high,
To bitter scorn a sacrifice,
And grinning infamy.

The stings of falsehood those shall try,
And hard unkindness' altered eye,
That mocks the tear it forced to flow;
And keen remorse with blood defiled,
And moody madness laughing wild
Amid severest woe.

[†]ministers agents, instruments (the personified abstracts)

Lo, in the vale of years beneath
A grisly troop are seen,
The painful family of death,
More hideous than their queen:
This racks the joints, this fires the veins,
That every labouring sinew strains,
Those in the deeper vitals rage:
Lo, poverty, to fill the band,
That numbs the soul with icy hand,
And slow-consuming age.

To each his sufferings: all are men,
Condemned alike to groan;
The tender for another's pain,
Th' unfeeling for his own.
Yet ah! why should they know their fate?
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies.
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more; where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise.

SONNET ON THE DEATH OF MR RICHARD WEST[†]

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phoebus[†] lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:
These ears, alas! for other notes repine,
A different object do these eyes require.
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,

Sonnet of the Death of Mr Richard West Gray's close friend had died two months before. In the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth criticises the poem's artificial diction
Phoebus Apollo, the sun god

The hapless nymph with wonder saw:

- 20 A whisker first and then a claw,
With many an ardent wish,
She stretched in vain to reach the prize.
What female heart can gold despise?
What cat's averse to fish?

- 25 Presumptuous maid! with looks intent
Again she stretched, again she bent,
Nor knew the gulf between.

- (Malignant Fate sat by and smiled)
The slippery verge her feet beguiled,
30 She tumbled headlong in.

- Eight times emerging from the flood
She mew'd to every watery god,
Some speedy aid to send.

- No dolphin[†] came, no nereid* stirred:
35 Nor cruel Tom nor Susan heard.
A favourite has no friend!

- From hence, ye beauties, undeceived,
Know, one false step is ne'er retrieved,
And be with caution bold.

- 40 Not all that tempts your wandering eyes
And heedless hearts is lawful prize;
Nor all that glisters gold.

1747

1748

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD[†]

- The curfew[†] tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

dolphin in Greek legend, one rescued Arion from the sea
Elegy written in a Country Churchyard No specific churchyard may be intended: Gray was familiar with the visual properties of the 'graveyard' poetry of the 1740s, such as Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743), and Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–5). Revised from the original drafts to give a complex view of the poet-figure, the *Elegy* was an instant popular success in its exploration of basic human themes, and its relation of imagery to emotion
curfew signal bell

- 10 And new-born pleasure brings to happier men:
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain.

1742

1775

ODE ON THE DEATH OF A FAVOURITE CAT, DROWNED IN A TUB OF GOLD FISHES[†]

- *Twas on a lofty vase's side,
Where China's gayest art had dyed
The azure flowers, that blow;
Demurest of the tabby kind,
5 The pensive Selima reclined,
Gazed on the lake below.

- Her conscious tail her joy declared;
The fair round face, the snowy beard,
The velvet of her paws,
10 Her coat that with the tortoise vies,
Her ears of jet and emerald eyes,
She saw; and purred applause.[†]

- Still had she gazed; but 'midst the tide
Two angel forms were seen to glide,
15 The genii[†] of the stream:
Their scaly armour's Tyrian[†] hue
Through richest purple to the view
Betrayed a golden gleam.

Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat One of Horace Walpole's cats had recently drowned. Gray plays with various stylistic levels, using mock-heroic and animal fable
purred applause suggests Eve's of her reflection (*Paradise Lost*, IV.456–66)
genii presiding spirits
Tyrian purple (from ancient Tyre)

5 Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

10 Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

15 Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude[†] forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

20 The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

25 Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe* has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

field

30 Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.

35 The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour.[†]
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

rude simple, uneducated

awaits . . . hour 'hour' is the verb's subject,
as word order imitates action

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If memory o'er their tomb no trophies[†] raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted[†] vault
40 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied[†] urn or animated* bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?

lifelike

45 Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill penury repressed their noble rage,*
50 And froze the genial* current of the soul.

passion
spirited

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
55 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden[†] that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton[†] here may rest,
60 Some Cromwell^{††} guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of listening senates[†] to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

65 Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

trophies elaborate monuments
fretted with carved patterns
storied showing a narrative

Milton and Cromwell are other seventeenth-
century types of fame
senates political assemblies

Hampden . . . Cromwell John Hampden
(1594–1643), an MP, defied Charles I;

70 The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,[†]
Or heap the shrine of luxury and pride
With incense kindled at the muse's flame.

75 Far from the madding[†] crowd's ignoble strife
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

80 Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial[†] still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unlettered muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

85 For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

90 On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

95 For thee[†] who, mindful of th' unhonoured dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

ingenuous shame natural sense of honour
madding acting madly
frail memorial unsophisticated tombstone,
with simple inscription
for thee . . . these stanzas imagine a rustic
describing to a third party the life and death
of the isolated poet-figure whose own epitaph
is then offered

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

105 'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

110 'One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

115 'The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.
Fair science* frowned not on his humble birth,
And melancholy marked him for her own.

learning

125 Large was his bounty and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
The bosom of his Father and his God.

c. 1746–50

1751

THE BARD. A PINDARIC ODE[†]

I. 1

'Ruin seize thee, ruthless king!
 Confusion on thy banners wait,
 Though fanned by conquest's crimson wing
 They mock the air with idle state.
 Helm nor hauberk's[†] twisted mail,
 Nor even thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail
 To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
 From Cambria's[†] curse, from Cambria's tears![†]
 Such were the sounds, that o'er the crested pride
 Of the first Edward scattered wild dismay,
 As down the steep of Snowdon's[†] shaggy side
 He wound with toilsome march his long array.
 Stout Glo'ster stood agast in speechless trance:
 'To arms!', cried Mortimer and couched his quivering lance.

I. 2

On a rock, whose haughty brow
 Frowns o'er old Conway's[†] foaming flood,
 Robed in the sable garb of woe,
 With haggard[†] eyes the poet stood
 (Loose his beard and hoary hair
 Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air);
 And, with a master's hand and prophet's fire,
 Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.
 'Hark, how each giant-oak and desert cave
 Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!
 O'er thee, oh King! their hundred arms they wave,
 Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe;
 Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,
 To high-born Hoel's[†] harp, or soft Llewellyn's[†] lay.

The Bard. A Pindaric Ode Like 'The Progress of Poesy' (1757), this is a consciously difficult poem, later annotated by Gray. He imitates the form of Pindar's odes, grouping his stanzas in threes: the first two, strophe and antistrophe, are different from the epode; there is a complex metrical and rhyming pattern. The sublime emotions, obscure allusions and rapid transitions imitate the original. The subject combines Gray's interests in Welsh poetry and in the function of literature. He imagines King Edward I in 1283, after the conquest of Wales, confronted

by the last bard, who laments his fellow-poets, and is joined by their spirits in prophesying ruin to Edward's line, until the accession of the Welsh Tudor, Henry VII, followed by a flowering of literature. The bard then commits suicide
hauberk chain-mail coat
Cambria Wales; Mount Snowdon and the river Conway are in the north
haggard 'from an unreclaimed hawk . . . looks wild' (Gray)
Hoel . . . *Modred* real Welsh names, but not historical bards

I. 3

'Cold is Cadwallo's[†] tongue,
 That hushed the stormy main:
 Brave Urien[†] sleeps upon his craggy bed:
 Mountains, ye mourn in vain
 Modred,[†] whose magic song
 Made huge Plinlimmon[†] bow his cloud-topped head.
 On dreary Arvon's[†] shore they lie,
 Smear'd with gore and ghastly pale:
 Far, far aloof th' affrighted ravens sail;
 The famish'd eagle screams and passes by.
 Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
 Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes,
 Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,
 Ye died amidst your dying country's cries –
 No more I weep. They do not sleep.
 On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,
 I see them sit, they linger yet,
 Avengers of their native land;
 With me in dreadful harmony they join,
 And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line.'

II. 1

'Weave the warp[†] and weave the woof,
 The winding-sheet[†] of Edward's race.
 Give ample room and verge enough
 The characters[†] of hell to trace.
 Mark the year and mark the night,
 When Severn[†] shall re-echo with affright
 The shrieks of death, through Berkeley's[†] roofs that ring,
 Shrieks of an agonizing King!
 She-wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs,
 That tearst the bowels of thy mangled mate,
 From thee be born who o'er thy country hangs
 The scourge[†] of heaven. What terrors round him wait!
 Amazement in his van,[†] with flight combined,
 And sorrow's faded form, and solitude behind.

Plinlimmon mountain in south Arvon Caernarvon, North Wales
Weave the warp the collective prophecy of the bards runs to 1.100
winding-sheet . . . *characters* corpse wrapper, marked with 'characters', signs
Severn . . . *heaven* Edward II was murdered in 1327 at Berkeley Castle, by the river Severn, through his French Queen, whose son, Edward III, scourged France
van vanguard, front of the army

II. 2

'Mighty victor,[†] mighty lord,
 Low on his funeral couch he lies!
 No pitying heart, no eye, afford
 A tear to grace his obsequies.
 Is the sable warrior fled?
 Thy son is gone. He rests among the dead.
 The swarm that in thy noon-tide beam were born?
 Gone to salute the rising morn.
 Fair laughs the morn and soft the zephyr blows,
 While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
 In gallant trim the gilded vessel[†] goes;
 Youth on the prow and pleasure at the helm,
 Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
 That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening-prey.

II. 3

'Fill high the sparkling bowl,
 The rich repast prepare,
 Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast:
 Close by the regal chair
 Fell thirst and famine scowl
 A baleful smile upon their baffled guest.
 Heard ye the din of battle bray,
 Lance to lance and horse to horse?
 Long years of havoc[†] urge their destined course,
 And through the kindred squadrons mow their way.
 Ye towers of Julius,[†] London's lasting shame,
 With many a foul and midnight murder fed,
 Revere his consort's[†] faith, his father's[†] fame,
 And spare the meek usurper's holy head.
 Above, below, the rose of snow,
 Twined with her blushing foe, we spread:
 The bristled Boar[†] in infant-gore
 Wallows beneath the thorny shade.

mighty victor Edward III died wretched in
 1377, after his son, the Black Prince (d. 1376)
gilded vessel in the reign of Richard II, who
 was eventually starved to death in 1400
 (1.81)
years of havoc the wars of York and
 Lancaster, the white and red roses
Julius . . . father's Caesar, reputed founder of

Tower of London, where the holy but
 Lancastrian Henry VI was murdered in 1471;
 his father was the warrior Henry V, his
consort a heroic woman
bristled Boar Richard III, alleged murderer of
 his nephews, was defeated in 1485 by the
 Tudor Henry VII, to end the wars

95 Now, brothers, bending o'er th' accursed loom,
 Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.

III. 1

'Edward, lo! to sudden fate
 (Weave we the woof. The thread is spun)
 Half of thy heart we consecrate.[†]
 100 (The web is wove. The work is done.)'
 'Stay, oh stay! nor thus forlorn
 Leave me unblessed, unpitied, here to mourn;
 In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,
 They melt, they vanish from my eyes.
 105 But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height
 Descending slow their glittering skirts unroll?
 Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,
 Ye unborn ages, crowd not on my soul!
 No more our long-lost Arthur[†] we bewail.
 110 All-hail, ye genuine kings, Britannia's issue, hail!

III. 2

'Girt with many a baron bold
 Sublime their starry fronts they rear;
 And gorgeous dames, and statesmen old
 In bearded majesty, appear.
 115 In the midst a form divine![†]
 Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-line;
 Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,
 Attemper'd sweet to virgin-grace.
 What strings symphonious tremble in the air,
 120 What strains of vocal transport round her play!
 Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear;
 They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
 Bright rapture calls and, soaring as she sings,
 Waves in the eye of heaven her many-coloured wings.

consecrate doom (Edward's wife died several
 years later)
Arthur the expected return of the Briton, King
 Arthur, was associated with the Welsh
 ancestry of the new Tudors
form divine Queen Elizabeth I, in whose reign
 (1558-1603) literature revives

III. 3

- 125 'The verse adorn again
Fierce war and faithful love,
And truth severe, by fairy fiction[†] dressed.
In buskined[†] measures move
Pale-grief and pleasing pain,
With horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast.
130 A voice[†] as of the cherub-choir
Gales from blooming Eden bear;
And distant warblings lessen on my ear,
That lost in long futurity expire.
135 Fond[†] impious man, thinkest thou yon sanguine cloud,
Raised by thy breath, has quenched the orb of day?
Tomorrow he repairs the golden flood,
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.
Enough for me: with joy I see
140 The different doom our fates assign.
Be thine despair and sceptred care;
To triumph,[†] and to die are mine.
He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height
Deep in the roaring tide he plunged to endless night.

1755–7

1757

From JOURNAL IN THE LAKE DISTRICT, 1769[†]

- Oct. 3. Wind at SE; a heavenly day. Rose at seven, and walked out
under the conduct of my landlord to Borrowdale. The grass was covered
with a hoar-frost, which soon melted, & exhaled in a thin bluish smoke.
Crossed the meadows obliquely, catching a diversity of views among
5 the hills over the lake & islands, and changing prospect at every ten
paces, left Cockshot and Castletill (which we formerly mounted) behind

fairy fiction Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie*

Queen (1590–6)

buskined dressed for tragedy (suggesting

Shakespeare)

A voice Milton, in *Paradise Lost* (1667)

Fond foolish (as the king's cloud of blood only
briefly hides the sun)

triumph in his liberty, and in his link with

future poets; Johnson is severe on the

morality, as on much else in the poem

Journal in the Lake District, 1769 Gray was

in Cumberland, near Derwent Water

- me, & drew near the foot of Walla Crag, whose bare & rocky brow,
cut perpendicularly down above 400 feet, as I guess, awfully overlooks
the way: our path here tends to the left, & the ground gently rising, &
covered with a glade of scattering trees & bushes on the very margin
of the water, opens both ways the most delicious view, that my eyes
ever beheld. Behind you are the magnificent heights of Walla Crag;
opposite lie the thick hanging woods of Lord Egremont, & Newland
Valley, with green & smiling fields embosomed in the dark cliffs; to
15 the left the jaws of Borrowdale, with that turbulent chaos of mountain
behind mountain rolled in confusion; beneath you, & stretching far
away to the right the shining purity of the Lake, just ruffled by the
breeze enough to show it is alive, reflecting rocks, woods, fields, &
inverted tops of mountains, with the white buildings of Keswick,
20 Crosthwaite church, & Skiddaw for a background at distance. Oh
Doctor! I never wished more for you; & pray think, how the glass
played its part in such a spot, which is called Carl-close-reeds: I choose
to set down these barbarous names, that anybody may enquire on the
place, & easily find the particular station that I mean. This scene
continues to Barrowgate, & a little farther, passing a brook called
25 Barrowbeck, we entered Borrowdale. The crags, named Lodore Banks
now begin to impend terribly over your way; & more terribly, when
you hear, that three years since an immense mass of rock tumbled at
once from the brow, & barred all access to the dale (for this is the only
road) till they could work their way through it. Luckily no one was
30 passing at the time of this fall; but down the side of the mountain, &
far into the lake lie dispersed the huge fragments of this ruin in all
shapes & in all directions. Something farther we turned aside into a
coppice, ascending a little in front of Lodore waterfall. The height
appears to be about 200 feet, the quantity of water not great, though
35 (these three days excepted) it had rained daily in the hills for near two
months before: but then the stream was nobly broken, leaping from
rock to rock, & foaming with fury. On one side a towering crag, that
spired up to equal, if not overtop, the neighbouring cliffs (this lay all in
shade & darkness) on the other hand a rounder broader projecting hill
40 shagged with wood & illumined by the sun, which glanced sideways
on the upper part of the cataract. The force of the water wearing a
deep channel in the ground hurries away to join the lake. We descended
again, and passed the stream over a rude bridge. Soon after we came
45 under Gowder Crag, a hill more formidable to the eye & to the
apprehension than that of Lodore; the rocks atop, deep-cloven perpendi-
cularly by the rains, hanging loose & nodding forwards, seem just
starting from their base in shivers: the whole way down & the road on

both sides is strewed with piles of the fragments strangely thrown across each other & of a dreadful bulk. The place reminds one of those passes in the Alps, where the guides tell you to move on with speed, & say nothing, lest the agitation of the air should loosen the snows above, and bring down a mass, that would overwhelm a caravan. I took their counsel here and hastened on in silence.

55 Non ragioniam di lor; ma guarda, e passa![†]
[Let us not speak of them; but look and pass on!]

Non ragioniam . . . passa! Dante, Italian poet
(1265–1321): *Inferno*, III.51

Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Orford

1717–97

Son of the Prime Minister, Sir Robert, Walpole was educated at Eton with Thomas Gray, with whom he made a troubled continental journey, 1739–41; after reconciliation, he published Gray's Pindaric Odes at his printing press at Strawberry Hill, outside London. This famous house (now part of a teachers' college) was elaborately decorated by him as a mock 'Gothic' castle, and became a tourist site. Inspired by a dream, Walpole wrote the first 'Gothic' novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and set the vogue for medieval dungeons, ghosts and persecuted heroines; his other writings include pioneer work on the visual arts, and a defence of Richard III. Walpole's political career was insignificant, but his access to high places proved valuable for his manuscript *Memoirs of the reigns of George II and III*. His masterpiece is his huge correspondence with a series of friends to whom he directed as appropriate his society gossip, literary anecdote (he looked down on Johnson and Boswell), political commentary, and autobiography. Now available in the great Yale edition, the letters are self-conscious works of art which keep one eye on future readers.

From LETTERS

To Richard West, c. Friday 15 May 1739, from Paris

[*Pomp and Piety*]

Dear West,

I should think myself to blame not to try to divert you, when you tell me I can. . . . Stand by, clear the way, make room for the pompous appearance of Versailles le grand! But no: it fell so short of my idea of it, mine, that I have resigned to Gray the office of writing its panegyric. He likes it. They say I am to like it better next Sunday; when the sun is to shine, the King is to be fine, the waterworks are to play, and the new Knights of the Holy Ghost are to be installed! Ever since Wednesday,

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the day we were there, we have done nothing but dispute about it. They say, we did not see it to advantage, that we ran through the apartments, saw the garden *en passant*, and slubbered over Trianon. I say, we saw nothing. However, we had time to see that the great front is a lumber of littleness, composed of black brick, stuck full of bad old busts, and fringed with gold rails. The rooms are all small, except the great gallery, which is noble, but totally wainscoted with looking-glass. The garden is littered with statues and fountains, each of which has its tutelary deity. In particular, the elementary God of Fire solaces himself in one. In another, Enceladus, in lieu of a mountain, is overwhelmed with many waters. There are avenues of water-pots, who disport themselves much in squirting up cascadelins. In short, 'tis a garden for a great child. Such was Louis Quatorze, who is here seen in his proper colours, where he commanded in person, unassisted by his armies and generals, and left to the pursuit of his own puerile ideas of glory.

We saw last week a place of another kind, and which has more the air of what it would be, than anything I have yet met with: it was the convent of the Chartreux. All the conveniences, or rather (if there was such a word) all the *adaptments* are assembled here, that melancholy, meditation, selfish devotion, and despair would require. But yet 'tis pleasing. Soften the terms, and mellow the uncouth horror that reigns here, but a little, and 'tis a charming solitude. It stands on a large space of ground, is old and irregular. The chapel is gloomy: behind it, through some dark passages, you pass into a large obscure hall, which looks like a combination-chamber for some hellish council. The large cloister surrounds their burying-ground. The cloisters are very narrow, and very long, and let into the cells, which are built like little huts detached from each other. We were carried into one, where lived a middle-aged man not long initiated into the order. He was extremely civil, and called himself Dom Victor. We have promised to visit him often. Their habit is all white: but besides this, he was infinitely clean in his person; and his apartment and garden, which he keeps and cultivates without any assistance, was neat to a degree. He has four little rooms, furnished in the prettiest manner, and hung with good prints. One of them is a library, and another a gallery. He has several canary-birds disposed in a pretty manner in breeding-cages. In his garden was a bed of good tulips in bloom, flowers and fruit-trees, and all neatly kept. They are permitted at certain hours to talk to strangers, but never to one another, or to go out of their convent. But what we chiefly went to see was the small cloister, with the history of St Bruno, their founder, painted by Le Soeur. It consists of twenty-two pictures, the figures a good deal less than life. But sure they are amazing! I don't know what Raphael may be in Rome, but these pictures excel all I have seen in Paris and England. The figure of the dead man who spoke at his burial, contains all the

strongest and horriddest ideas, of ghastriness, hypocrisy discovered, and the height of damnation; pain and cursing. A Benedictine monk, who was there at the same time, said to me of this picture: *C'est une fable, mais on la croyait autrefois* [It's only a story, but they used to believe it]. Another, who showed me relics in one of their churches, expressed as much ridicule for them. The pictures I have been speaking of are ill preserved, and some of the finest heads defaced, which was done at first by a rival of Le Soeur's. — Adieu! dear West, take care of your health; and some time or other we will talk over all these things with more pleasure than I have had in seeing them.

Yours ever.

To Richard West From a hamlet among the mountains of Savoy, Sept. 28, 1739

[*Wild Nature*]

Precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings, Salvator Rosa[†] — the pomp of our park and the meekness of our palace! Here we are, the lonely lords of glorious desolate prospects. I have kept a sort of resolution which I made, of not writing to you as long as I stayed in France: I am now a quarter of an hour out of it, and write to you. Mind, 'tis three months since we heard from you. I begin this letter among the clouds; where I shall finish, my neighbour heaven probably knows: 'tis an odd wish in a mortal letter, to hope not to finish it on this side the atmosphere. You will have a billet tumble to you from the stars when you least think of it; and that I should write it too! Lord, how potent that sounds! But I am to undergo many transmutations before I come to 'yours ever.' Yesterday I was a shepherd of Dauphiné; today an Alpine savage; tomorrow a Carthusian monk; and Friday a Swiss Calvinist. I have one quality which I find remains with me in all worlds and in all ethers; I brought it with me from your world, and am admired for it in this, 'tis my esteem for you: this is a common thought among you, and you will laugh at it, but it is new here; as new to remember one's friends in the world one has left, as for you to remember those you have lost.

Aix in Savoy, Sept. 30th.

We are this minute come in here, and here's an awkward abbé this minute come in to us. I asked him if he would sit down. *Oui, oui, oui.* He has ordered us a radish soup for supper, and has brought a

Salvator Rosa 1615–73; dramatic landscape painter

chessboard to play with Mr Conway. I have left 'em in the act, and am set down to write to you. Did you ever see anything like the prospect we saw yesterday? I never did. We rode three leagues to see the Grande Chartreuse; expected bad roads, and the finest convent in the kingdom. We were disappointed pro and con. The building is large and plain, and has nothing remarkable but its primitive simplicity: they entertained us in the neatest manner, with eggs, pickled salmon, dried fish, conserves, cheese, butter, grapes and figs, and pressed us mightily to lie there. We tumbled into the hands of a lay-brother, who, unluckily having the charge of the meal and bran, showed us little besides. They desired us to set down our names in the list of strangers, where, among others, we found two mottoes of our countrymen for whose stupidity and brutality we blushed. . . . But the road, West, the road! winding round a prodigious mountain, and surrounded with others, all shagged with hanging woods, obscured with pines or lost in clouds! Below, a torrent breaking through cliffs, and tumbling through fragments of rocks! Sheets of cascades forcing their silver speed down channelled precipices, and hasting into the roughened river at the bottom! Now and then an old foot-bridge, with a broken rail, a leaning cross, a cottage, or the ruin of an hermitage! This sounds too bombast and too romantic to one that has not seen it, too cold for one that has. If I could send you my letter post between two lovely tempests that echoed each other's wrath, you might have some idea of this noble roaring scene, as you were reading it. Almost on the summit, upon a fine verdure, but without any prospect, stands the Chartreuse. We stayed there two hours, rode back through this charming picture, wished for a painter, wished to be poets! Need I tell you we wished for you?

Good night!

To George Montagu, Thursday 13 November 1760 [*The Burial of King George III*]

Even the honeymoon of a new reign don't produce events every day. There is nothing but the common toying of addresses and kissing hands. . . . For the King himself he seems all good-nature, and wishing to satisfy everybody. All his speeches are obliging. I saw him again yesterday, and was surprised to find the levee room had lost so entirely the air of the lion's den. This young man don't stand in one spot, with his eyes fixed royally on the ground, and dropping bits of German news. He walks about and speaks to everybody. I saw him afterwards on the throne, where he is graceful and genteel, sits with dignity, and reads his answers to addresses well. . . .

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Do you know I had the curiosity to go to the burying t'other night; I had never seen a royal funeral. Nay, I walked as a rag of quality, which I found would be, and so it was, the easiest way of seeing it. It is absolutely a noble sight. The Prince's Chamber hung with purple and a quantity of silver lamps, the coffin under a canopy of purple velvet, and six vast chandeliers of silver on high stands had a very good effect: the ambassador from Tripoli and his son were carried to see that chamber. The procession through a line of foot-guards, every seventh man bearing a torch, the horse-guards lining the outside, their officers with drawn sabres and crape sashes, on horseback, the drums muffled, the fifes, bells tolling and minute guns, all this was very solemn. But the charm was the entrance of the Abbey,[†] where we were received by the Dean and chapter in rich copes, the choir and almsmen all bearing torches; the whole Abbey so illuminated, that one saw it to greater advantage than by day; the tombs, long aisles, and fretted roof all appearing distinctly, and with the happiest chiaroscuro. There wanted nothing but incense, and little chapels here and there with priests saying mass for the repose of the defunct – yet one could not complain of its not being Catholic enough. I had been in dread of being coupled with some boy of ten years old – but the heralds were not very accurate, and I walked with George Grenville, taller and older enough to keep me in countenance. When we came to the chapel of Henry VII all solemnity and decorum ceased – no order was observed, people sat or stood where they could or would, the yeomen of the guard were crying out for help, oppressed by the immense weight of the coffin, the Bishop read sadly, and blundered in the prayers, the fine chapter, *Man that is born of a woman*, was chanted not read, and the anthem, besides being unmeasurably tedious, would have served as well for a nuptial. The real serious part was the figure of the Duke of Cumberland, heightened by a thousand melancholy circumstances. He had a dark brown adonis,[†] and a cloak of black cloth with a train of five yards. Attending the funeral of a father, how little reason soever he had to love him, could not be pleasant. His leg extremely bad, yet forced to stand upon it near two hours, his face bloated and distorted with his late paralytic stroke, which has affected too one of his eyes, and placed over the mouth of the vault, into which in all probability he must himself so soon descend – think how unpleasant a situation! He bore it all with a firm and unaffected countenance. This grave scene was fully contrasted by the burlesque Duke of Newcastle – he fell into a fit of crying the moment he came into the chapel and flung himself back in a stall, the Archbishop hovering over him with a smelling bottle – but in two minutes his curiosity got the better of his hypocrisy and he ran about the chapel

Abbey Westminster Abbey

adonis kind of wig

with his glass to spy who was or was not there, spying with one hand and mopping his eyes with t'other. Then returned the fear of catching cold, and the Duke of Cumberland, who was sinking with heat, felt himself weighed down, and turning round, found it was the Duke of Newcastle standing upon his train to avoid the chill of the marble. It was very theatric to look down into the vault, where the coffin lay, attended by mourners with lights. Clavering, the Groom of the Bedchamber, refused to sit up with the body, and was dismissed by the King's order.

I have nothing more to tell you but a trifle, a very trifle – the King of Prussia has totally defeated Marshal Daun. This which would have been prodigious news a month ago, is nothing today; it only takes its turn among the questions, 'Who is to be Groom of the Bedchamber?' 'What is Sir T. Robinson to have?' I have been at Leicester Fields today; the crowd was immoderate; I don't believe it will continue so. Good night.

Yours ever

H. W.

Tobias George Smollett

1721–71

Born near Loch Lomond in Scotland, Smollett failed in his early medical career, and joined a naval expedition against the Spaniards in the West Indies, whose horrors he graphically described in his first novel, *Roderick Random* (1748). *Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and *Ferdinand Fathom* (1753) continued his accounts of violence and black humour in an often cruel world; he also translated his gentler master, Cervantes (1755). Major non-fiction included editing the *Critical Review* (1756–63), and a best-selling *Complete History of England* (1757–8); he was a vigorous literary and political controversialist, receiving a three-month prison sentence for libel. His *Travels through France and Italy* (1766) delight by abrasive attitudes, which made Sterne call him 'Smelfungus' in his *Sentimental Journey*. Smollett died in Italy, having published his most genial novel, the epistolary *Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), in which a family and their servants relate in a variety of styles their travels through England and Scotland, back to Wales. Dickens was a great reader of Smollett, and learned from his techniques of character portrayal.

From THE EXPEDITION OF HUMPHRY CLINKER[†]

[*The Pleasures of Bath and London*]

To Dr. LEWIS from Matthew Bramble

You ask me, why I don't take the air a-horseback, during this fine weather? – In which of the avenues of this paradise would you have

The Expedition of Humphry Clinker The central figure, Matthew Bramble, a crusty but warm-hearted squire, writes about his

experiences in the fashionable resort of Bath, and in London. Lydia is his niece, Tabitha his sister

me take that exercise? Shall I commit myself to the high-roads of London or Bristol, to be stifled with dust, or pressed to death in the midst of post-chaises, flying-machines,[†] waggons, and coal-horses; besides the troops of fine gentlemen that take to the high-way, to show their horsemanship; and the coaches of fine ladies, who go thither to show their equipages? Shall I attempt the Downs, and fatigue myself to death in climbing up an eternal ascent, without any hopes of reaching the summit? Know then, I have made divers desperate leaps at those upper regions; but always fell backward into this vapour-pit,[‡] exhausted and dispirited by those ineffectual efforts; and here we poor valetudinarians pant and struggle, like so many Chinese gudgeons,[†] gasping in the bottom of a punch-bowl. By Heaven, it is a kind of enchantment! If I do not speedily break the spell, and escape, I may chance to give up the ghost in this nauseous stew of corruption – It was but two nights ago, that I had like to have made my public exit, at a minute's warning. One of my greatest weaknesses is that of suffering myself to be overruled by the opinion of people, whose judgment I despise – I own, with shame and confusion of face, that impertinency of any kind I cannot resist. This want of courage and constancy is an original flaw in my nature, which you must have often observed with compassion, if not with contempt. I am afraid some of our boasted virtues may be traced up to this defect. –

Without further preamble, I was persuaded to go to a ball, on purpose to see Liddy dance a minuet with a young petulant jackanapes, the only son of a wealthy undertaker[†] from London, whose mother lodges in our neighbourhood, and has contracted an acquaintance with Tabby. I sat a couple of long hours, half stifled, in the midst of a noisome crowd; and could not help wondering, that so many hundreds of those that rank as rational creatures, could find entertainment in seeing a succession of insipid animals, describing the same dull figure for a whole evening, on an area, not much bigger than a tailor's shop-board. If there had been any beauty, grace, activity, magnificent dress, or variety of any kind, howsoever absurd, to engage the attention, and amuse the fancy, I should not have been surprised; but there was no such object: it was a tiresome repetition of the same languid, frivolous scene, performed by actors that seemed to sleep in all their motions – The continual swimming of those phantoms before my eyes, gave me a swimming of the head; which was also affected by the fouled air, circulating through such a number of rotten human bellows – I therefore retreated towards the door, and stood in the passage to the next room, talking to my

flying-machines rapid coaches
vapour-pit Bath lies in the valley of the River
 Avon
gudgeons small fish
undertaker contractor

friend Quin; when an end being put to the minuets, the benches were removed to make way for the country-dances; and the multitude rising at once, the whole atmosphere was put in commotion. Then, all of a sudden, came rushing upon me an Egyptian gale, so impregnated with pestilential vapours, that my nerves were overpowered, and I dropped senseless upon the floor.

You may easily conceive what a clamour and confusion this accident must have produced, in such an assembly – I soon recovered, however, and found myself in an easy chair, supported by my own people – Sister Tabby, in her great tenderness, had put me to the torture, squeezing my head under her arm, and stuffing my nose with spirit of hartshorn, till the whole inside was excoriated. I no sooner got home, than I sent for doctor Ch –, who assured me, I needed not be alarmed, for my swooning was entirely occasioned by an accidental impression of fetid effluvia upon nerves of uncommon sensibility. I know not how other people's nerves are constructed; but one would imagine they must be made of very coarse materials, to stand the shock of such a horrid assault. It was, indeed, a *compound of villainous smells*, in which the most violent stinks, and the most powerful perfumes, contended for the mastery. Imagine to yourself a high exalted essence of mingled odours, arising from putrid gums, imposthumated lungs, sour flatulencies, rank arm-pits, sweating feet, running sores and issues, plasters, ointments, and embrocations, hungary-water, spirit of lavender, assafoetida drops, musk, hartshorn, and sal volatile; besides a thousand frowzy steams, which I could not analyse. Such, O Dick! is the fragrant æther we breathe in the polite assemblies of Bath – Such is the atmosphere I have exchanged for the pure, elastic, animating air of the Welsh mountains – O *Rus*, *quando te aspiciam*[†] [oh countryside, when shall I see you]. – I wonder what the devil possessed me –

But few words are best: I have taken my resolution – You may well suppose I don't intend to entertain the company with a second exhibition – I have promised, in an evil hour, to proceed to London, and that promise shall be performed; but my stay in the metropolis shall be brief. . . .

To Dr. LEWIS from Matthew Bramble

Dear Doctor,
 London is literally new to me; new in its streets, houses, and even in its situation; as the Irishman said, 'London is now gone out of town.' What I left open fields, producing hay and corn, I now find covered with streets, and squares, and palaces, and churches. I am credibly

O *Rus* . . . *aspiciam* Horace, *Satires*, II.6.60

informed, that in the space of seven years, eleven thousand new houses have been built in one quarter of Westminster, exclusive of what is daily added to other parts of this unwieldy metropolis. Pimlico and Knightsbridge are now almost joined to Chelsea and Kensington; and if this infatuation continues for half a century, I suppose the whole country of Middlesex will be covered with brick.

It must be allowed, indeed, for the credit of the present age, that London and Westminster are much better paved and lighted than they were formerly. The new streets are spacious, regular, and airy; and the houses generally convenient. The Bridge at Blackfriars is a noble monument of taste and public-spirit – I wonder how they stumbled upon a work of such magnificence and utility. But, notwithstanding these improvements, the capital is become an overgrown monster; which, like a dropsical head, will in time leave the body and extremities without nourishment and support. The absurdity will appear in its full force, when we consider, that one sixth part of the natives of this whole extensive kingdom is crowded within the bills[†] of mortality. What wonder that our villages are depopulated, and our farms in want of day-labourers? The abolition of small farms, is but one cause of the decrease of population. Indeed, the incredible increase of horses and black cattle, to answer the purposes of luxury, requires a prodigious quantity of hay and grass, which are raised and managed without much labour; but a number of hands will always be wanted for the different branches of agriculture, whether the farms be large or small. The tide of luxury has swept all the inhabitants from the open country – The poorest squire, as well as the richest peer, must have his house in town, and make a figure with an extraordinary number of domestics. The plough-boys, cow-herds, and lower hinds, are debauched and seduced by the appearance and discourse of those coxcombs in livery, when they make their summer excursions. They desert their dirt and drudgery, and swarm up to London, in hopes of getting into service, where they can live luxuriously and wear fine clothes, without being obliged to work; for idleness is natural to man – Great numbers of these, being disappointed in their expectation, become thieves and sharpers; and London being an immense wilderness, in which there is neither watch nor ward of any signification, nor any order or police, affords them lurking-places as well as prey.

There are many causes that contribute to the daily increase of this enormous mass; but they may be all resolved into the grand source of luxury and corruption – About five and twenty years ago, very few, even of the most opulent citizens of London, kept any equipage, or

within the bills in the area of London death statistics

even any servants in livery. Their tables produced nothing but plain boiled and roasted, with a bottle of port and a tankard of beer. At present, every trader in any degree of credit, every broker and attorney, maintains a couple of footmen, a coachman, and postilion. He has his town-house, and his country-house, his coach, and his postchaise. His wife and daughters appear in the richest stuffs, bespangled with diamonds. They frequent the court, the opera, the theatre, and the masquerade. They hold assemblies at their own houses: they make sumptuous entertainments, and treat with the richest wines of Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne. The substantial tradesman, who went to pass his evenings at the ale-house for fourpence half-penny, now spends three shillings at the tavern, while his wife keeps card-tables at home; she must likewise have fine clothes, her chaise, or pad,[†] with country lodgings, and go three times a week to public diversions. Every clerk, apprentice, and even waiter of tavern or coffee-house, maintains a gelding by himself, or in partnership, and assumes the air and apparel of a petit maitre – The gayest places of public entertainment are filled with fashionable figures; which, upon inquiry, will be found to be journeymen tailors, serving-men, and abigails,[†] disguised like their betters.

In short, there is no distinction or subordination left – The different departments of life are jumbled together – The hod-carrier, the low mechanic, the tapster, the publican, the shop-keeper, the pettifogger,[†] the citizen, and courtier, *all tread upon the kibes of one another*: actuated by the demons of profligacy and licentiousness, they are seen every where, rambling, riding, rolling, rushing, justling, mixing, bouncing, cracking, and crashing in one vile ferment of stupidity and corruption – All is tumult and hurry; one would imagine they were impelled by some disorder of the brain, that will not suffer them to be at rest. The foot-passengers run along as if they were pursued by bailiffs. The porters and chairmen trot with their burdens. People, who keep their own equipages, drive through the streets at full speed. Even citizens, physicians, and apothecaries, glide in their chariots like lightning. The hackney-coachmen make their horses smoke, and the pavement shakes under them; and I have actually seen a waggon pass through Piccadilly at the hand-gallop. In a word, the whole nation seems to be running out of their wits.

The diversions of the times are not ill suited to the genius of this incon-jurious monster, called the *public*. Give it noise, confusion, glare, and glitter; it has no idea of elegance and propriety – What are the amusements at Ranelagh?[†] One half of the company are following one

pad horse
abigails lady's-maids

pettifogger low practitioner
Ranelagh pleasure garden in Chelsea

another's tails, in an eternal circle; like so many blind asses in an olive-mill, where they can neither discourse, distinguish, nor be distinguished; while the other half are drinking hot water, under the denomination of tea, till nine or ten o'clock at night, to keep them awake for the rest of the evening. As for the orchestra, the vocal music especially, it is well for the performers that they cannot be heard distinctly. Vauxhall[†] is a composition of baubles, overcharged with paltry ornaments, ill conceived, and poorly executed; without any unity of design, or propriety of disposition. It is an unnatural assembly of objects, fantastically illuminated in broken masses; seemingly contrived to dazzle the eyes and divert the imagination of the vulgar – Here a wooden lion, there a stone statue; in one place, a range of things like coffee-house boxes, covered a-top; in another, a parcel of ale-house benches; in a third, a puppet-show representation of a tin cascade; in a fourth, a gloomy cave of a circular form, like a sepulchral vault half lighted; in a fifth, a scanty slip of grass-plot, that would not afford pasture sufficient for an ass's colt. The walks, which nature seems to have intended for solitude, shade, and silence, are filled with crowds of noisy people, sucking up the nocturnal rheums of an aguish climate; and through these gay scenes, a few lamps glimmer like so many farthing candles.

When I see a number of well-dressed people, of both sexes, sitting on the covered benches, exposed to the eyes of the mob; and, which is worse, to the cold, raw, night-air, devouring sliced beef, and swilling port, and punch, and cider, I can't help compassionating their temerity, while I despise their want of taste and decorum; but, when they course along those damp and gloomy walks, or crowd together upon the wet gravel, without any other cover than the cope of Heaven, listening to a song, which one half of them cannot possibly hear, how can I help supposing they are actually possessed by a spirit, more absurd and pernicious than any thing we meet with in the precincts of Bedlam? In all probability, the proprietors of this, and other public gardens of inferior note, in the skirts of the metropolis, are, in some shape, connected with the faculty of physic, and the company of undertakers; for, considering that eagerness in the pursuit of what is called pleasure, which now predominates through every rank and denomination of life, I am persuaded, that more gout, rheumatisms, catarrhs, and consumptions are caught in these nocturnal pastimes, *sub dio* [in the open], than from all the risks and accidents to which a life of toil and danger is exposed.

These, and other observations, which I have made in this excursion, will shorten my stay at London, and send me back with a double relish to my solitude and mountains. . . .

Vauxhall ornamental musical gardens

[Win Jenkins, Tabitha's servant, sends letters whose comic illiteracy is reinforced by creative ambiguities of domestic language which undermine her religious and sexual attitudes: *pyebill/Bible; light of grease/grace; bride's fever/favour*]

[A Domestic Epistle]

To Mrs MARY JONES, at Brambleton-hall

Dear Mary Jones,

Miss Liddy is so good as to unclose me in a kiver as fur as Gloster, and the carrier will bring it to hand – God send us all safe to Monmouthshire, for I'm quite jaded with rambling – 'Tis a true saying, *live and learn* – O woman, what chuckling and changing have I seen! – Well, there's nothing sartain in this world – Who would have thought that mistriss, after all the pains taken for the good of her prusias sole, would go for to throw away her poor body? that she would cast the heys of infection upon such a carrying-crow as Lashmyhago! as old as Matthewsullin, as dry as a red herring, and as pore as a starved veezel – O, Molly! hadst thou seen him come down the ladder, in a shirt so scanty, that it could not kiver his nakedness! – The young 'squire called him Dunquickset; but he looked for all the world like Cradoc-ap Morgan, the ould tinker, that suffered at Abergany for steeling of kettle – Then he's a profane scuffle, and, as Mr Clinker says, no better than an impfiddle, continually playing upon the pyebill!† and the new-burth – I doubt he has as little manners as money; for he can't say a civil word, much more make me a present of a pair of gloves for good-will; but he looks as if he wanted to be very forewood and familiar – O! that ever a gentlewoman of years and discretion should tare her air, and cry and disporridge herself for such a nubjack! as the song goes –

I vow she wou'd fain have a burd
That bids such a price for an owl.

but, for sartain, he must have dealt with some Scotch musician to bring her to this pass – As for me, I put my trust in the Lord; and I have got a slice of witch elm sowed in the gathers of my under petticoat; and Mr Clinker assures me, that by the new light of grease,† I may defy the devil and all his works – But I nose what I nose – If mistriss should take up with Lashmyhago, this is no service for me – Thank God, there's no want of places; and if it wan't for wan thing, I would – but, no matter – Madam Baynar's woman has twenty good pounds a-year and parquisites; and dresses like a parson of distinkson – I dined with her and the valley de shambles, with bags and golden jackets; but there was nothing kimfittable to eat, being as how they live upon board, and

35 having nothing but a piss of could cuddling tart and some blamangey,
I was tuck with the cullick and a murcy it was that mistress had her
viol of assings in the cox.

But, as I was saying, I think for sartain this match will go forewood;
for things are come to a creesus; and I have seen with my own hays,
such smuggling – But I scorn for to exclose the secrets of the family;
and if it wance comes to marrying, who nose but the frolick may go
round – I believes as how, Miss Liddy would have no reversion if her
swan would appear; and you would be surprised, Molly, to receive a
bride's fever^t from your humble sarvant – but this is all suppository,
dear girl; and I have sullenly promised to Mr Clinker, that neither man,
woman, nor child, shall no that arrow said a civil thing to me in the
way of infection – I hopes to drink your health at Brambleton-hall, in a
horn of October, before the month be out – Pray let my bed be turned
once a-day, and the windore opened, while the weather is dry; and
burn a few billets with some brush in the footman's garret, and see
their mattrash be dry as a bone; for both our gentlemen have got a sad
could by lying in damp shits at sir Tummas Ballfart's. No more at
present, but my sarvice to Saul and the rest of our fellow-sarvents,
being,

Dear Mary Jones,
always yours,

WIN. JENKINS

Oct. 4.

1771

Christopher Smart

1722–71

One of the most remarkable poetic talents of the century, Smart showed his classical scholarship as a Cambridge undergraduate. A friend of Johnson, he published georgic and satiric poetry in the 1750s, but for most of the period 1757–63 was confined in places for the insane. *A Song to David* (1763) praises God in mystically patterned groups of stanzas; David, king and psalmist, had praised God to the harp. *Jubilate Agno* (Rejoice in the Lamb), evidently written during his madness, was not published until 1939. In lines of varying length and rhythm, it praises God's creation in structures based on the antiphonal responses of Hebrew poetry. The diction and imagery of these poems are extraordinarily rich combinations of scientific and biblical materials; in many respects they are far from the high Augustan verse style of the period, although his minor poems show the influence of Pope (Smart also translated Horace). He died in a debtors' prison. His reputation has risen greatly in this century, partly helped by the fresh publication.

From JUBILATE AGNO Fragment B

[*My Cat Jeoffry*]

695

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.
For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.

For is this done by wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness.

For then he leaps up to catch the musk, which is the blessing of God upon his prayer.

700 For he rolls upon prank to work it in.

For having done duty and received blessing he begins to consider himself.

For this he performs in ten degrees.

- For first he looks upon his fore-paws to see if they are clean.
 For secondly he kicks up behind to clear away there.
 For thirdly he works it upon stretch with the fore paws extended.
 For fourthly he sharpens his paws by wood.
 For fifthly he washes himself.
 For Sixthly he rolls upon wash.
 For Seventhly he fleas himself, that he may not be interrupted upon the beat.
- 710 For Eighthly he rubs himself against a post.
 For Ninthly he looks up for his instructions.
 For Tenthly he goes in quest of food.
 For having considered God and himself he will consider his neighbour.
 For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.
 715 For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it chance.
 For one mouse in seven escapes by his dallying.
 For when his day's work is done his business more properly begins.
 For he keeps the Lord's watch in the night against the adversary.
 For he counteracts the powers of darkness by his electrical skin and glaring eyes.
- 720 For he counteracts the Devil, who is death, by brisking about the life.
 For in his morning orisons he loves the sun and the sun loves him.
 For he is of the tribe of Tiger.
 For the Cherub Cat is a term of the Angel Tiger.
 For he has the subtlety and hissing of a serpent, which in goodness he suppresses.
- 725 For he will not do destruction, if he is well-fed, neither will he spit without provocation.
 For he purrs in thankfulness, when God tells him he's a good Cat.
 For he is an instrument for the children to learn benevolence upon.
 For every house is incomplete without him and a blessing is lacking in the spirit.
- For the Lord^t commanded Moses concerning the cats at the departure of the Children of Israel from Egypt.
 730 For every family had one cat at least in the bag.
 For the English Cats are the best in Europe.
 For he is the cleanest in the use of his fore-paws of any quadrupede.
 For the dexterity of his defence is an instance of the love of God to him exceedingly.
- For he is the quickest to his mark of any creature.
 735 For he is tenacious of his point.
 For he is a mixture of gravity and waggery.
 For he knows that God is his Saviour.

the Lord Exodus 12.32 does not mention cats

- For there is nothing sweeter than his peace when at rest.
 For there is nothing brisker than his life when in motion.
 For he is of the Lord's poor and so indeed is he called by benevolence perpetually — Poor Jeoffry! poor Jeoffry! the rat has bit thy throat.
 For I bless the name of the Lord Jesus that Jeoffry is better.
 For the divine spirit comes about his body to sustain it in complete cat.
 For his tongue is exceeding pure so that it has in purity what it wants in music.
- 740 For he is docile and can learn certain things.
 For he can set up with gravity which is patience upon approbation.
 For he can fetch and carry, which is patience in employment.
 For he can jump over a stick which is patience upon proof positive.
 For he can spraggle^t upon waggle at the word of command.
 For he can jump from an eminence into his master's bosom.
 750 For he can catch the cork and toss it again.
 For he is hated by the hypocrite and miser.
 For the former is afraid of detection.
 For the latter refuses the charge.
 For he camels his back to bear the first notion of business.
 For he is good to think on, if a man would express himself neatly.
 755 For he made a great figure in Egypt for his signal services.
 For he killed the Ichneumon^t-rat very pernicious by land.
 For his ears are so acute that they sting again.
 For from this proceeds the passing quickness of his attention.
 For by stroking of him I have found out electricity.
 For I perceived God's light about him both wax and fire.
 For the Electrical fire is the spiritual substance, which God sends from heaven to sustain the bodies both of man and beast.
 For God has blessed him in the variety of his movements.
 For, though he cannot fly, he is an excellent clamberer.
 765 For his motions upon the face of the earth are more than any other quadrupede.
 For he can tread to all the measures upon the music.
 For he can swim for life.
 For he can creep.

1758-63

1939

spraggle sprawl, stretch

Ichneumon animal like a weasel

From A SONG TO DAVID

[God's Creation]

XVIII

He[†] sung of God – the mighty source
Of all things – the stupendous force
On which all strength depends;
From whose right arm, beneath whose eyes,
All period, power, and enterprise
Commences, reigns, and ends.

XIX

Angels – their ministry and meed,
Which to and fro with blessings speed,
Or with their citterns[†] wait;
Where Michael[†] with his millions bows,
Where dwells the seraph[†] and his spouse,
The cherub[†] and her mate.

XX

Of man – the semblance and effect
Of God and Love – the Saint elect
For infinite applause –
To rule the land, and briny broad,
To be laborious in his laud,
And heroes in his cause.

XXI

The world – the clustering spheres[†] he made,
The glorious light, the soothing shade,
Dale, champaign,[†] grove, and hill;
The multitudinous abyss,
Where secrecy remains in bliss,
And wisdom hides her skill.

XXII

Trees, plants, and flowers – of virtuous root;
Gem* yielding blossom, yielding fruit,
Choice gums and precious balm;
Bless ye the nosegay in the vale,

bud

He King David, the psalmist

citterns here, harps

Michael leader of angels (*seraph* and *cherub*)

spheres carrying the planets

champaign open country

And with the sweeteners of the gale
Enrich the thankful psalm.

XXIII

Of fowl – e'en every beak and wing
Which cheer the winter, hail the spring,
That live in peace or prey;
They that make music, or that mock,
The quail, the brave domestic cock,
The raven, swan, and jay.

135

XXIV

Of fishes – every size and shape,
Which nature frames of light escape,
Devouring man to shun:
The shells are in the wealthy deep,
The shoals upon the surface leap,
And love the glancing sun.

140

XXV

Of beasts – the beaver plods his task;
While the sleek tigers roll and bask,
Nor yet the shades arouse:
Her cave the mining coney scoops;
Where o'er the mead the mountain stoops,
The kids exult and browse.

145

150

XXVI

Of gems – their virtue and their price,
Which hid in earth from man's device,
Their darts of lustre sheathe;
The jasper of the master's stamp,
The topaz blazing like a lamp
Among the mines beneath.

155

XXVII

Blest was the tenderness he felt
When to his graceful harp he knelt,
And did for audience call;
When Satan with his hand he quelled,
And in serene suspense he held
The frantic throes of Saul.[†]

160

Saul David's music expelled an evil spirit from
the King of Israel (1 Samuel 16.23)

XXVIII

His furious foes no more maligned
 As he such melody divined,
 And sense and soul detained;
 Now striking strong, now soothing soft,
 He sent the godly sounds aloft,
 Or in delight refrained. . . .

165

[Adoration]

XLIX

O DAVID, highest in the list
 Of worthies, on God's ways insist,
 The genuine word repeat:
 Vain are the documents of men,
 And vain the flourish of the pen
 That keeps the fool's conceit.

290

L

PRAISE above all – for praise prevails;
 Head up the measure, load the scales,
 And good to goodness add:
 The generous soul her Saviour aids,
 But peevish obloquy degrades;
 The Lord is great and glad.

300

LI

For ADORATION all the ranks
 Of angels yield eternal thanks,
 And DAVID in the midst;
 With God's good poor, which, last and least
 In man's esteem, thou to thy feast,[†]
 O blessed bride-groom, bidst.

305

LII

For ADORATION seasons change,
 And order, truth, and beauty range,
 Adjust, attract, and fill:
 The grass the polyanthus checks;
 And polished porphyry[†] reflects,
 By the descending rill.

310

feast see Luke 14.7–21

porphyry variegated stone

LIII

Rich almonds colour to the prime
 For ADORATION; tendrils climb,
 And fruit-trees pledge their gems;
 And Ivys* with her gorgeous vest
 Builds for her eggs her cunning nest,
 And bell-flowers bow their stems.

315

hummingbird

LIV

With vinous syrup cedars spout;
 From rocks pure honey gushing out,
 For ADORATION springs:
 All scenes of painting crowd the map
 Of nature; to the mermaid's pap
 The scaled infant clings.

320

LV

The spotted ounce* and playsome cubs
 Run rustling 'mongst the flowering shrubs,
 And lizards feed the moss;
 For ADORATION beasts embark,
 While waves upholding halcyon's* ark
 No longer roar and toss.

325

lynx

kingfisher

330

LVI

While Israel sits beneath his fig,
 With coral root and amber sprig
 The weaned adventurer sports;
 Where to the palm the jasmine cleaves,
 For ADORATION 'mongst the leaves
 The gale his peace reports.

335

LVII

Increasing days their reign exalt,
 Nor in the pink and mottled vault
 Th' opposing spirits tilt;
 And, by the coasting reader spied,
 The silverlings and crusions* glide
 For ADORATION gilt.

340

fish

LVIII

For ADORATION ripening canes
 And cocoa's purest milk detains
 The western pilgrim's staff;

345

Where rain in claspings boughs inclosed,
And vines with oranges disposed,
Embower the social laugh.

LIX

Now labour his reward receives,
For ADORATION counts his sheaves
To peace, her bounteous prince;
The nectarine his strong tint imbibes,
And apples of ten thousand tribes,
And quick peculiar quince.

LX

The wealthy crops of whitening rice,
'Mongst thyme* woods and groves of spice,
For ADORATION grow;
And, marshalled in the fenced land,
The peaches and pomegranates stand,
Where wild carnations blow.

gum-tree

LXI

The laurels with the winter strive;
The crocus burnishes alive
Upon the snow-clad earth:
For ADORATION myrtles stay
To keep the garden from dismay,
And bless the sight from dearth.

LXII

The pheasant shows his pompous neck;
And ermine, jealous of a speck,
With fear eludes offence:
The sable, with his glossy pride,
For ADORATION is descried,
Where frosts the wave condense.

LXIII

The cheerful holly, pensive yew,
And holy thorn, their trim renew;
The squirrel hoards his nuts:
All creatures batten o'er their stores,
And careful nature all her doors
For ADORATION shuts.

LXIV

For ADORATION, DAVID's psalms
Lift up the heart to deeds of alms;
And he, who kneels and chants,
Prevails his passions to control,
Finds meat and medicine to the soul,
Which for translation[†] pants.

LXV

For ADORATION, beyond match,
The scholar[†] bulfinch aims to catch
The soft flute's ivory touch;
And, careless on the hazel spray,
The daring redbreast keeps at bay
The damsel's greedy clutch.

LXVI

For ADORATION, in the skies,
The Lord's philosopher[†] spies
The Dog, the Ram, and Rose;
The planets ring, Orion's sword;
Nor is his greatness less adored
In the vile worm that glows.

LXVII

For ADORATION on the strings[†]
The western breezes work their wings,
The captive ear to soothe –
Hark! 'tis a voice – how still, and small –
That makes the cataracts to fall,
Or bids the sea be smooth.

LXVIII

For ADORATION, incense comes
From bezoar,[†] and Arabian gums;
And on the civet's fur.
But as for prayer, or ere it faints,
Far better is the breath of saints
Than galbanum[†] and myrrh.

translation removal (to heaven)
scholar taught to mimic

philosopher the astronomer sees God's works
in the constellations following

strings the Aeolian harp is stirred by the wind
bezoar scented medicinal stone
galbanum like myrrh, a scented gum

LXIX

410 For ADORATION from the down,
Of damsons to th' anana's* crown,
God sends to tempt the taste;
And while the luscious zest invites,
The sense, that in the scene delights,
Commands desire be chaste.

pineapple

LXX

415 For ADORATION, all the paths
Of grace are open, all the baths
Of purity refresh;
And all the rays of glory beam
To deck the man of God's esteem,
Who triumphs o'er the flesh.

LXXI

420 For ADORATION, in the dome
Of Christ the sparrows find an home;
And on his olives perch:
The swallow also dwells with thee,
O man of God's humility,
Within his Saviour CHURCH.

LXXII

430 Sweet is the dew that falls betimes,
And drops upon the leafy limes;
Sweet Hermon's† fragrant air:
Sweet is the lily's silver bell,
And sweet the wakeful tapers smell
That watch for early prayer.

LXXIII

435 Sweet the young nurse with love intense,
Which smiles o'er sleeping innocence;
Sweet when the lost arrive:
Sweet the musician's ardour beats,
While his vague mind's in quest of sweets,
The choicest flowers to hive.

Hermon biblical mountain (Psalm 133)

LXXIV

440 Sweeter in all the strains of love,
The language of thy turtle dove,
Paired to thy swelling chord;
Sweeter with every grace endued,
The glory of thy gratitude,
Respired unto the Lord.

LXXV

445 Strong is the horse upon his speed;
Strong in pursuit the rapid glede,†
Which makes at once his game:
Strong the tall ostrich on the ground;
Strong through the turbulent profound
Shoots xiphias* to his aim.

sword-fish

LXXVI

455 Strong is the lion – like a coal
His eye-ball – like a bastion's mole†
His chest against the foes:
Strong, the gier-eagle* on his sail,
Strong against tide, th' enormous whale
Emerges as he goes.

vulture

LXXVII

460 But stronger still, in earth and air,
And in the sea, the man of prayer;
And far beneath the tide;
And in the seat to faith assigned,
Where ask is have, where seek is find,
Where knock is open wide.

LXXVIII

465 Beauteous the fleet before the gale;
Beauteous the multitudes in mail,†
Ranked arms and crested heads:
Beauteous the garden's umbrage mild,
Walk, water, meditated wild,
And all the bloomy beds.

glede a bird of prey
bastion's mole tower's strong wall

mail soldiers' chain armour

LXXIX

470 Beauteous the moon full on the lawn;
 And beauteous, when the veil's withdrawn,
 The virgin to her spouse:
 Beauteous the temple decked and filled,
 When to the heaven of heavens they build
 Their heart-directed vows.

LXXX

475 Beauteous, yea beauteous more than these,
 The shepherd king[†] upon his knees,
 For his momentous trust;
 With wish of infinite conceit,
 For man, beast, mute,* the small and great,
 And prostrate dust to dust.

fish

LXXXI

Precious the bounteous widow's mite;
 And precious, for extreme delight,
 The largess from the churl:
 Precious the ruby's blushing blaze,
 And alba's[†] blest imperial rays,
 And pure cerulean pearl.

LXXXII

Precious the penitential tear;
 And precious is the sigh sincere,
 Acceptable to God:
 And precious are the winning flowers,
 In gladsome Israel's feast of bowers,
 Bound on the hallowed sod.

LXXXIII

495 More precious that diviner part
 Of David, even the Lord's own heart,
 Great, beautiful, and new:
 In all things where it was intent,
 In all extremes, in each event,
 Proof – answering true to true.

shepherd king David himself (1 Samuel 16.11)

alba white stone from God (Revelation 2.17)

LXXXIV

500 Glorious the sun in mid career;
 Glorious th' assembled fires appear;
 Glorious the comet's train:
 Glorious the trumpet and alarm;
 Glorious th' almighty stretched-out arm;
 Glorious th' enraptured main:

LXXXV

505 Glorious the northern lights astream;
 Glorious the song, when God's the theme;
 Glorious the thunder's roar:
 Glorious hosanna from the den;
 Glorious the catholic* amen;
 Glorious the martyr's gore:

universal

LXXXVI

515 Glorious – more glorious is the crown
 Of Him that brought salvation down
 By meekness, called thy Son;
 Thou at stupendous truth believed,
 And now the matchless deed's achieved,
 DETERMINED, DARED, and DONE.

1763

Adam Smith

1723–90

Smith was educated at Glasgow University and at Balliol College, Oxford. His academic and literary career, at the start of the Scottish Enlightenment's leadership of Europe, shows the range and versatility of learned men of the period. Having lectured on rhetoric and belles-lettres, he became Professor of Logic and then Moral Philosophy (1752) at Glasgow, and published his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759. Leaving his chair, he travelled as tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch on the Continent, where he developed his interest in political economy, later given its fullest expression in his major work *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). He wrote also on aesthetic topics, and was a member of Johnson's Club. In Smith's view, individual self-interests accumulate to the public benefit: here he demonstrates the value of the division of labour in an apparently simple manufacturing process.

From THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

[The Division of Labour]

The effects of the division of labour, in the general business of society, will be more easily understood by considering in what manner it operates in some particular manufactures. It is commonly supposed to be carried furthest in some very trifling ones; not perhaps that it really is carried further in them than in others of more importance: but in those trifling manufactures which are destined to supply the small wants of but a small number of people, the whole number of workmen must necessarily be small; and those employed in every different branch of the work can often be collected into the same workhouse, and placed at once under the view of the spectator. In those great manufactures, on the contrary, which are destined to supply the great wants of the great body of the people, every different branch of the work employs so great a number of workmen, that it is impossible to collect them all into the same workhouse. We can seldom see more, at one time, than those employed in one single branch. Though in such manufactures, therefore, the work may really be divided into a much greater number

of parts, than in those of a more trifling nature, the division is not near so obvious, and has accordingly been much less observed.

To take an example, therefore, from a very trifling manufacture, but one in which the division of labour has been very often taken notice of, the trade of a pin-maker: a workman not educated to this business (which the division of labour has rendered a distinct trade), nor acquainted with the use of the machinery employed in it (to the invention of which the same division of labour has probably given occasion), could scarce, perhaps, with his utmost industry, make one pin a day, and certainly could not make twenty. But in the way in which this business is now carried on, not only the whole work is a peculiar trade, but it is divided into a number of branches, of which the greater part are likewise peculiar trades. One man draws out the wire; another straightens it; a third cuts it; a fourth points it; a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head; to make the head requires two or three distinct operations; to put it on is a peculiar business; to whiten the pins is another; it is even a trade by itself to put them into the paper; and the important business of making a pin, is in this manner, divided into about eighteen distinct operations, which in some manufactories, are all performed by distinct hands though in others the same man will sometimes perform two or three of them. I have seen a small manufactory of this kind, where ten men only were employed, and where some of them consequently performed two or three distinct operations. But though they were very poor, and therefore but indifferently accommodated with the necessary machinery they could, when they exerted themselves, make among them about twelve pounds of pins a day. There are in a pound upwards of four thousand pins of a middling size. Those ten persons, therefore, could make among them upwards of forty-eight thousand pins in a day. Each person, therefore, making a tenth part of forty-eight thousand pins, might be considered as making four thousand eight hundred pins in a day. But if they had all wrought separately and independently, and without any of them having been educated to this peculiar business, they certainly could not each of them have made twenty, perhaps not one pin a day; that is, certainly, not the two hundred and fortieth, perhaps not the four thousand eight hundredth, part of what they are at present capable of performing, in consequence of a proper division and combination of their different operations.

Sir Joshua Reynolds

1729–92

After study in Italy (1750–2), Reynolds quickly rose to profitable domination of English painting, especially of portraiture, to which he brought wide historical knowledge and the grand style. A leading member of the Johnson circle, he painted many of its celebrities. As first President of the Royal Academy he gave a series of *Discourses* (1769–90) on art and aesthetic theory, which had much in common with current literary criticism. William Blake offered a detailed refutation of his values in extensive annotations of the texts.

From DISCOURSES ON ART, No. 3

[*Nature and the Grand Style*]

The wish of the genuine painter must be more extensive: instead of endeavouring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavour to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas; instead of seeking praise, by deceiving the superficial sense of the spectator, he must strive for fame, by captivating the imagination.

The principle now laid down, that the perfection of this art does not consist in mere imitation, is far from being new or singular. It is, indeed, supported by the general opinion of the enlightened part of mankind. The poets, orators, and rhetoricians of antiquity, are continually enforcing this position; that all the arts receive their perfection from an ideal beauty, superior to what is to be found in individual nature. They are ever referring to the practice of the painters and sculptors of their times, particularly Phidias[†] (the favourite artist of antiquity), to illustrate their assertions. As if they could not sufficiently express their admiration of his genius by what they knew, they have recourse to poetical enthusiasm. They call it inspiration; a gift from heaven. The artist is supposed to have ascended the celestial regions, to furnish his mind with this perfect idea of beauty. . . .

Phidias c. 490–448 BC; Greek sculptor

20 The Moderns are not less convinced than the Ancients of this superior power existing in the art; nor less sensible of its effects. Every language has adopted terms expressive of this excellence. The *gusto grande* of the Italians, the *beau idéal* of the French, and the *great style, genius* and *taste* among the English, are but different appellations of the same thing. It is this intellectual dignity, they say, that ennobles the painter's art; that lays the line between him and the mere mechanic; and produces those great effects in an instant, which eloquence and poetry, by slow and repeated efforts, are scarcely able to attain.

25 Such is the warmth with which both the Ancients and Moderns speak of this divine principle of the art; but, as I have formerly observed, enthusiastic admiration seldom promotes knowledge. Though a student by such praise may have his attention roused, and a desire excited, of running in this great career; yet it is possible that what has been said to excite, may only serve to deter him. He examines his own mind, and perceives there nothing of that divine inspiration, with which, he is told, so many others have been favoured. He never travelled to heaven to gather new ideas; and he finds himself possessed of no other qualifications than what mere common observation and a plain understanding can confer. Thus he becomes gloomy amidst the splendour of figurative declamation, and thinks it hopeless, to pursue an object which he supposes out of the reach of human industry.

40 But on this, as upon many other occasions, we ought to distinguish how much is to be given to enthusiasm, and how much to reason. We ought to allow for, and we ought to commend, that strength of vivid expression, which is necessary to convey, in its full force, the highest sense of the most complete effect of art; taking care at the same time, not to lose in terms of vague admiration, that solidity and truth of principle, upon which alone we can reason, and may be enabled to practise.

50 It is not easy to define in what this great style consists; nor to describe, by words, the proper means of acquiring it, if the mind of the student should be at all capable of such an acquisition. Could we teach taste or genius by rules, they would be no longer taste and genius. But though there neither are, nor can be, any precise invariable rules for the exercise, or the acquisition, of these great qualities, yet we may truly say that they always operate in proportion to our attention in observing the works of nature, to our skill in selecting, and to our care in digesting, methodising, and comparing our observations. There are many beauties in our art, that seem, at first, to lie without the reach of precept, and yet may easily be reduced to practical principles. Experience is all in all; but it is not every one who profits by experience; and most people err, not so much from want of capacity to find their object, as from not knowing what object to pursue. This great ideal perfection and

beauty are not to be sought in the heavens, but upon the earth. They are about us, and upon every side of us. But the power of discovering what is deformed in nature, or in other words, what is particular and uncommon, can be acquired only by experience; and the whole beauty and grandeur of the art consists, in my opinion, in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities, and details of every kind.

All the objects which are exhibited to our view by nature, upon close examination will be found to have their blemishes and defects. The most beautiful forms have something about them like weakness, minuteness, or imperfection. But it is not every eye that perceives these blemishes. It must be an eye long used to the contemplation and comparison of these forms; and which, by a long habit of observing what any set of objects of the same kind have in common, has acquired the power of discerning what each wants in particular. This long laborious comparison should be the first study of the painter, who aims at the greatest style. By this means, he acquires a just idea of beautiful forms; he corrects nature by herself, her imperfect state by her more perfect. His eye being enabled to distinguish the accidental deficiencies, excrescences, and deformities of things, from their general figures, he makes out an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any one original; and what may seem a paradox, he learns to design naturally by drawing his figures unlike to any one object. This idea of the perfect state of nature, which the artist calls the Ideal Beauty, is the great leading principle, by which works of genius are conducted. By this Phidias acquired his fame. He wrought upon a sober principle, what has so much excited the enthusiasm of the world; and by this method you, who have courage to tread the same path, may acquire equal reputation.

This is the idea which has acquired, and which seems to have a right to the epithet of *divine*; as it may be said to preside, like a supreme judge, over all the productions of nature; appearing to be possessed of the will and intention of the Creator, as far as they regard the external form of living beings. When a man once possesses this idea in its perfection, there is no danger, but that he will be sufficiently warmed by it himself, and be able to warm and ravish every one else.

Thus it is from a reiterated experience, and a close comparison of the objects in nature, that an artist becomes possessed of the idea of that central form, if I may so express it, from which every deviation is deformity. But the investigation of this form, I grant, is painful. . . .

1770

From DISCOURSES ON ART, No. 7

[Nature and Taste]

We will take it for granted, that reason is something invariable and fixed in the nature of things; and without endeavouring to go back to an account of first principles, which for ever will elude our search, we will conclude, that whatever goes under the name of taste, which we can fairly bring under the dominion of reason, must be considered as equally exempt from change. If therefore, in the course of this enquiry, we can show that there are rules for the conduct of the artist which are fixed and invariable, it follows of course, that the art of the connoisseur, or, in other words, taste, has likewise invariable principles.

Of the judgment which we make on the works of art, and the preference that we give to one class of art over another, if a reason be demanded, the question is perhaps evaded by answering, I judge from my taste; but it does not follow that a better answer cannot be given, though, for common gazers, this may be sufficient. Every man is not obliged to investigate the causes of his approbation or dislike.

The arts would lie open for ever to caprice and casualty, if those who are to judge of their excellencies had no settled principles by which they are to regulate their decisions, and the merit or defect of performances were to be determined by unguided fancy. And indeed we may venture to assert, that whatever speculative knowledge is necessary to the artist, is equally and indispensably necessary to the connoisseur.

The first idea that occurs in the consideration of what is fixed in art, or in taste, is that presiding principle of which I have so frequently spoken in former discourses – the general idea of nature. The beginning, the middle, and the end of every thing that is valuable in taste, is comprised in the knowledge of what is truly nature; for whatever notions are not conformable to those of nature, or universal opinion, must be considered as more or less capricious.

My notion of nature comprehends not only the forms which nature produces, but also the nature and internal fabric and organisation, as I may call it, of the human mind and imagination. The terms beauty, or nature, which are general ideas, are but different modes of expressing the same thing, whether we apply these terms to statues, poetry, or picture. Deformity is not nature, but an accidental deviation from her accustomed practice. This general idea therefore ought to be called Nature, and nothing else, correctly speaking, has a right to that name. But we are so far from speaking, in common conversation, with any such accuracy, that, on the contrary, when we criticise Rembrandt^t and

other Dutch painters, who introduced into their historical pictures exact representations of individual objects with all their imperfections, we say – though it is not in a good taste, yet it is nature.

This misapplication of terms must be very often perplexing to the young student. Is not art, he may say, an imitation of nature? Must he not therefore who imitates her with the greatest fidelity, be the best artist? By this mode of reasoning Rembrandt has a higher place than Raphael.[†] But a very little reflection will serve to show us that these particularities cannot be nature: for how can that be the nature of man, in which no two individuals are the same?

It plainly appears, that as a work is conducted under the influence of general ideas, or partial, it is principally to be considered as the effect of a good or bad taste.

As beauty therefore does not consist in taking what lies immediately before you, so neither, in our pursuit of taste, are those opinions which we first received and adopted, the best choice, or the most natural to the mind and imagination. In the infancy of our knowledge we seize with greediness the good that is within our reach; it is by after consideration, and in consequence of discipline, that we refuse the present for a greater good at a distance. The nobility or elevation of all arts, like the excellency of virtue itself, consists in adopting this enlarged and comprehensive idea; and all criticism built upon the more confined view of what is natural, may properly be called *shallow* criticism, rather than false: its defect is, that the truth is not sufficiently extensive. . . .

1776

From DISCOURSES ON ART, No. 11 *[Genius in Art]*

The highest ambition of every artist is to be thought a man of genius. As long as this flattering quality is joined to his name he can bear with patience the imputation of carelessness, incorrectness, or defects of whatever kind.

So far indeed is the presence of genius from implying an absence of faults, that they are considered by many as its inseparable companions. Some go such lengths as to take indications from them, and not only

Raphael 1483–1520; Italian Renaissance painter

excuse faults on account of genius, but presume genius from the existence of certain faults.

It is certainly true, that a work may justly claim the character of genius, though full of errors; and it is equally true, that it may be faultless, and yet not exhibit the least spark of genius. This naturally suggests an enquiry, a desire at least of enquiring, what qualities of a work and of a workman may justly entitle a painter to that character.

I have in a former discourse [3] endeavoured to impress you with a fixed opinion, that a comprehensive and critical knowledge of the works of nature is the only source of beauty and grandeur. But when we speak to painters we must always consider this rule, and all rules, with a reference to the mechanical practice of their own particular art. It is not properly in the learning, the taste, and the dignity of the ideas, that genius appears as belonging to a painter. There is a genius particular and appropriated to his own trade (as I may call it), distinguished from all others. For that power, which enables the artist to conceive his subject with dignity, may be said to belong to general education; and is as much the genius of a poet, or the professor of any other liberal art, or even a good critic in any of those arts, as of a painter. Whatever sublime ideas may fill his mind, he is a painter only as he can put in practice what he knows, and communicate those ideas by visible representation.

If my expression can convey my idea, I wish to distinguish excellence of this kind by calling it the genius of mechanical performance. This genius consists, I conceive, in the power of expressing that which employs your pencil, whatever it may be, *as a whole*; so that the general effect and power of the whole may take possession of the mind, and for a while suspend the consideration of the subordinate and particular beauties or defects.

The advantage of this method of considering objects is what I wish now more particularly to enforce. At the same time I do not forget that a painter must have the power of contracting as well as dilating his sight; because he that does not at all express particulars, expresses nothing; yet it is certain, that a nice discrimination of minute circumstances, and a punctilious delineation of them, whatever excellence it may have (and I do not mean to detract from it), never did confer on the artist the character of genius.

Beside those minute differences in things which are frequently not observed at all, and, when they are, make little impression, there are in all considerable objects great characteristic distinctions, which press strongly on the senses, and therefore fix the imagination. These are by no means, as some persons think, an aggregate of all the small discriminating particulars; nor will such an accumulation of particulars ever express them. These answer to what I have heard great lawyers

call the leading points in a case, or the leading cases relative to those points.

The detail of particulars, which does not assist the expression of the main characteristic, is worse than useless, it is mischievous, as it dissipates the attention, and draws it from the principal point. It may be remarked, that the impression which is left on our mind, even of things which are familiar to us, is seldom more than their general effect; beyond which we do not look in recognising such objects. To express this in painting, is to express what is congenial and natural to the mind of man, and what gives him by reflection his own mode of conceiving. The other presupposes *nicety* and *research*, which are only the business of the curious and attentive, and therefore does not speak to the general sense of the whole species; in which common, and, as I may so call it, mother tongue, every thing grand and comprehensive must be uttered.

I do not mean to prescribe what degree of attention ought to be paid to the minute parts; this it is hard to settle. We are sure that it is expressing the general effect of the whole which alone can give to objects their true and touching character; and wherever this is observed, whatever else may be neglected, we acknowledge the hand of a master. We may even go further, and observe, that when the general effect only is presented to us by a skilful hand, it appears to express the object represented in a more lively manner than the minutest resemblance would do. . . .

1782

Edmund Burke

1729-97

Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, Burke came to London for a law career. He became an MP in 1765, and had a great reputation as an orator (speeches before and on the American war; on India; like Sheridan, he spoke in the impeachment of Warren Hastings). He supported liberal causes (Catholic emancipation; abolition of the slave trade) but criticised violent social change in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), his best-known political work. His literary interests appear in his friendships, as founder-member of Johnson's Club, in his help of Crabbe, in his work for the *Annual Register* (which published poetry as well as records of events), and in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). This major work of aesthetic theory explores the literary value of vastness, obscurity, terror; it extended the debate about *Paradise Lost*, and provided a critical background for the novelties of such works as Gray's Odes and the Gothic novel. As opposed to the lofty, emotional sublime, the beautiful is seen as small and highly-finished.

From PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY INTO THE ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS OF THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL

Part I SECTION VII Of the SUBLIME

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. . . .

5

When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience. The cause of this I shall endeavour to investigate hereafter.

10

[*Terror, Obscurity, Power*]

Part II SECTION I Of the passion caused by the SUBLIME

The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence and respect.

10

SECTION II TERROR

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain. Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror, be endued with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on any thing as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous. There are many animals, who though far from being large, are yet capable of raising ideas of the sublime, because they are considered as objects of terror. As serpents and poisonous animals of almost all kinds. And to things of great dimensions, if we annex an adventitious idea of terror, they become without comparison greater. A level plain of a vast extent on land, is certainly no mean idea; the prospect of such a plain may be as extensive as a prospect of the ocean; but can it ever fill the mind with any thing so great as the ocean itself? This is owing to several causes, but it is owing to none more than this, that the ocean is an object of no small terror. Indeed terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime. . . .

25

SECTION III OBSCURITY

To make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be

necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds, which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings.

Those despotic governments, which are founded on the passions of men, and principally upon the passion of fear, keep their chief as much as may be from the public eye. The policy has been the same in many cases of religion. Almost all the heathen temples were dark. Even in the barbarous temples of the Americans at this day, they keep their idol in a dark part of the hut, which is consecrated to his worship. For this purpose too the druids performed all their ceremonies in the bosom of the darkest woods, and in the shade of the oldest and most spreading oaks. No person seems better to have understood the secret of heightening, or of setting terrible things, if I may use the expression, in their strongest light by the force of a judicious obscurity, than Milton.

His description[†] of Death in the second book is admirably studied; it is astonishing with what a gloomy pomp, with what a significant and expressive uncertainty of strokes and colouring he has finished the portrait of the king of terrors.

50

The other shape,

If shape it might be called that shape had none

Distinguishable, in member, joint, or limb;

Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,

For each seemed either; black he stood as night;

Fierce as ten furies; terrible as hell;

And shook a deadly dart. What seemed his head

The likeness of a kingly crown had on.

In this description[†] all is dark, uncertain, confused, terrible, and sublime to the last degree.

SECTION IV Of the difference between CLEARNESS and OBSCURITY with regard to the passions

It is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it *affecting* to the imagination. If I make a drawing of a palace, or a temple, or a landscape, I present a very clear idea of those objects; but then (allowing for the effect of imitation which is something) my picture can at most affect only as the palace, temple, or landscape would have affected in the reality. On the other hand, the most lively and spirited verbal

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description I can give, raises a very obscure and imperfect *idea* of such objects; but then it is in my power to raise a stronger *emotion* by the description than I could do by the best painting. This experience constantly evinces. The proper manner of conveying the *affections* of the mind from one to another, is by words; there is a great insufficiency in all other methods of communication; and so far is a clearness of imagery from being absolutely necessary to an influence upon the passions, that they may be considerably operated upon without presenting any image at all, by certain sounds adapted to that purpose; of which we have a sufficient proof in the acknowledged and powerful effects of instrumental music. In reality a great clearness helps but little towards affecting the passions, as it is in some sort an enemy to all enthusiasms whatsoever. . . .

Among the common sort of people, I never could perceive that painting had much influence on their passions. It is true that the best sorts of painting, as well as the best sorts of poetry, are not much understood in that sphere. But it is most certain, that their passions are very strongly roused by a fanatic preacher, or by the ballads[†] of Chevy Chase, or the children in the wood, and by other little popular poems and tales that are current in that rank of life. I do not know of any paintings, bad or good, that produce the same effect. So that poetry with all its obscurity, has a more general as well as a more powerful dominion over the passions than the other art. And I think there are reasons in nature why the obscure idea, when properly conveyed, should be more affecting than the clear. It is our ignorance of things that causes all our admiration, and chiefly excites our passions. Knowledge and acquaintance make the most striking causes affect but little. It is thus with the vulgar, and all men are as the vulgar in what they do not understand. The ideas of eternity, and infinity, are among the most affecting we have, and yet perhaps there is nothing of which we really understand so little, as of infinity and eternity. We do not any where meet a more sublime description than this justly celebrated one of Milton, wherein he gives the portrait[†] of Satan with a dignity so suitable to the subject.

100 He above the rest

In shape and gesture proudly eminent
 Stood like a tower; his form had yet not lost
 All her original brightness, nor appeared
 Less than archangel ruin'd, and th' excess
 Of glory obscured: as when the sun new ris'n
 Looks through the horizontal misty air
 Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon

ballads see Addison's *Spectator* 70

portrait PL, I.589-99

110 In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
 On half the nations; and with fear of change
 Perplexes monarchs.

115 Here is a very noble picture; and in what does this poetical picture consist? in images of a tower, an archangel, the sun rising through mists, or in an eclipse, the ruin of monarchs, and the revolutions of kingdoms. The mind is hurried out of itself, by a crowd of great and confused images; which affect because they are crowded and confused. For separate them, and you lose much of the greatness, and join them, and you infallibly lose the clearness. The images raised by poetry are always of this obscure kind; though in general the effects of poetry are by no means to be attributed to the images it raises; which point we shall examine more at large hereafter. But painting, when we have allowed for the pleasure of imitation, can only affect simply by the images it presents; and even in painting a judicious obscurity in some things contributes to the effect of the picture; because the images in painting are exactly similar to those in nature; and in nature dark, confused, uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions than those have which are more clear and determinate. . . .

I am sensible that this idea has met with opposition,[†] and is likely still to be rejected by several. But let it be considered that hardly any thing can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity; which nothing can do whilst we are able to perceive its bounds; but to see an object distinctly, and to perceive its bounds, is one and the same thing. A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea. There is a passage in the book of Job[†] amazingly sublime, and this sublimity is principally due to the terrible uncertainty of the thing described. *In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before mine eyes; there was silence; and I heard a voice, - Shall mortal man be more just than God? We are first prepared with the utmost solemnity for the vision; we are first terrified, before we are let even into the obscure cause of our emotion; but when this grand cause of terror makes its appearance, what is it? is it not, wrapt up in the shades of its own incomprehensible darkness, more awful, more striking, more terrible, than the liveliest description, than the clearest painting could possible represent it? . . .*

opposition to the first edition

Job 4.13-17

SECTION V POWER

Besides these things which *directly* suggest the idea of danger, and those which produce a similar effect from a mechanical cause, I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power. And this branch rises as naturally as the other two branches, from terror, the common stock of every thing that is sublime. The idea of power at first view seems of the class of these indifferent ones, which may equally belong to pain or to pleasure. But in reality, the affection arising from the idea of vast power, is extremely remote from that neutral character. For first, we must remember, that the idea of pain, in its highest degree, is much stronger than the highest degree of pleasure; and that it preserves the same superiority through all the subordinate gradations. From hence it is, that where the chances for equal degrees of suffering or enjoyment are in any sort equal, the idea of the suffering must always be prevalent. And indeed the ideas of pain, and above all of death, are so very affecting, that whilst we remain in the presence of whatever is supposed to have the power of inflicting either, it is impossible to be perfectly free from terror. Again, we know by experience, that for the enjoyment of pleasure, no great efforts of power are at all necessary; nay we know, that such efforts would go a great way towards destroying our satisfaction: for pleasure must be stolen, and not forced upon us; pleasure follows the will; and therefore we are generally affected with it by many things of a force greatly inferior to our own. But pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly. So that strength, violence, pain and terror, are ideas that rush in upon the mind together. . . .

Let us look at another strong animal in the two distinct lights in which we may consider him. The horse in the light of an useful beast, fit for the plough, the road, the draught, in every social useful light the horse has nothing of the sublime; but is it thus that we are affected with him, *whose neck^t is clothed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, who swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage, neither believeth that it is the sound of the trumpet?* In this description the useful character of the horse entirely disappears, and the terrible and sublime blaze out together. We have continually about us animals of a strength that is considerable, but not pernicious. Amongst these we never look for the sublime: it comes upon us in the gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness, in the form of the lion, the tiger, the panther, or rhinoceros. Whenever strength is only useful, and employed for our benefit or our pleasure, then it is never sublime; for nothing can act agreeably to us, that does not act in conformity to our will; but

whose neck Job 39

to act agreeably to our will, it must be subject to us; and therefore can never be the cause of a grand and commanding conception. The description of the wild ass, in Job, is worked up into no small sublimity, merely by insisting on his freedom, and his setting mankind at defiance; otherwise the description of such an animal could have had nothing noble in it. . . .

SECTION VII VASTNESS

Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime. This is too evident, and the observation too common, to need any illustration; it is not so common, to consider in what ways greatness of dimension, vastness of extent, or quantity, has the most striking effect. For certainly, there are ways, and modes, wherein the same quantity of extension shall produce greater effects than it is found to do in others. Extension is either in length, height, or depth. Of these the length strikes least; an hundred yards of even ground will never work such an effect as a tower an hundred yards high, or a rock or mountain of that altitude. I am apt to imagine likewise, that height is less grand than depth; and that we are more struck at looking down from a precipice, than at looking up at an object of equal height, but of that I am not very positive. A perpendicular has more force in forming the sublime, than an inclined plane; and the effects of a rugged and broken surface seem stronger than where it is smooth and polished. . . . However, it may not be amiss to add to these remarks upon magnitude; that, as the great extreme of dimension is sublime, so the last extreme of littleness is in some measure sublime likewise; when we attend to the infinite divisibility of matter, when we pursue animal life into these excessively small, and yet organised beings, that escape the nicest inquisition of the sense, when we push our discoveries yet downward, and consider those creatures so many degrees yet smaller, and the still diminishing scale of existence, in tracing which the imagination is lost as well as the sense, we become amazed and confounded at the wonders of minuteness; nor can we distinguish in its effect this extreme of littleness from the vast itself. For division must be infinite as well as addition; because the idea of a perfect unity can no more be arrived at, than that of a complete whole to which nothing may be added.

SECTION VIII INFINITY

Another source of the sublime, is *infinity*; if it does not rather belong to the last. Infinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime. There are scarce any things which can become the objects

of our senses that are really, and in their own nature infinite. But the eye not being able to perceive the bounds of many things, they seem to be infinite, and they produce the same effects as if they were really so. We are deceived in the like manner, if the parts of some large object are so continued to any indefinite number, that the imagination meets no check which may hinder its extending them at pleasure.

Whenever we repeat any idea frequently, the mind by a sort of mechanism repeats it long after the first cause has ceased to operate. After whirling about; when we sit down, the objects about us still seem to whirl. After a long succession of noises, as the fall of waters, or the beating of forge hammers, the hammers beat and the water roars in the imagination long after the first sounds have ceased to affect it; and they die away at last by gradations which are scarcely perceptible. . . .

SECTION XII DIFFICULTY

Another source of greatness is *Difficulty*. When any work seems to have required immense force and labour to effect it, the idea is grand. Stonehenge, neither for disposition nor ornament, has any thing admirable; but those huge rude masses of stone, set on end, and piled each on other, turn the mind on the immense force necessary for such a work. Nay the rudeness of the work increases this cause of grandeur, as it excludes the idea of art, and contrivance; for dexterity produces another sort of effect which is different enough from this. . . .

SECTION XIV LIGHT

. . . Darkness is more productive of sublime ideas than light. Our great poet¹ was convinced of this; and indeed so full was he of this idea, so entirely possessed with the power of a well managed darkness, that, in describing the appearance of the Deity, amidst that profusion of magnificent images, which the grandeur of his subject provokes him to pour out upon every side, he is far from forgetting the obscurity which surrounds the most incomprehensible of all beings, but

255 -- With the majesty of *darkness* round
Circles his throne.

And what is no less remarkable, our author had the secret of preserving this idea, even when he seemed to depart the farthest from it, when he describes the light and glory which flows from the divine presence; a light which by its very excess is converted into a species of darkness,

great poet in *Paradise Lost*, II.266-7; III.380

Dark with excessive *light* thy skirts appear.

Here is an idea not only poetical in an high degree, but strictly and philosophically just. . . .

Part III SECTION XXVII The SUBLIME and BEAUTIFUL compared

On closing this general view of beauty, it naturally occurs, that we should compare it with the sublime; and in this comparison there appears a remarkable contrast. For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; and however they may vary afterwards from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them, a distinction never to be forgotten by any whose business it is to affect the passions. In the infinite variety of natural combinations we must expect to find the qualities of things the most remote imaginable from each other united in the same object. We must expect also to find combinations of the same kind in the works of art. But when we consider the power of an object upon our passions, we must know that when any thing is intended to affect the mind by the force of some predominant property, the affection produced is like to be the more uniform and perfect, if all the other properties or qualities of the object be of the same nature, and tending to the same design as the principal;

If black, and white blend, soften, and unite,
A thousand ways, are there no black and white?¹

If the qualities of the sublime and beautiful are sometimes found united, does this prove, that they are the same, does it prove, that they are any way allied, does it prove even that they are not opposite and contradictory? Black and white may soften, may blend, but they are not therefore the same. Nor when they are so softened and blended with each other, or with different colours, is the power of black as black, or of white as white, so strong as when each stands uniform and distinguished.

If black . . . white Pope, *Essay on Man*, II.213-14

[Reality, Words, Passions]

Part V SECTION V

... In reality poetry and rhetoric do not succeed in exact description so well as painting does; their business is to affect rather by sympathy than imitation; to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves. This is their most extensive province, and that in which they succeed the best.

SECTION VI POETRY not strictly an imitative art

Hence we may observe that poetry, taken in its most general sense, cannot with strict propriety be called an art of imitation. It is indeed an imitation so far as it describes the manners and passions of men which their words can express ... There it is strictly imitation; and all merely *dramatic* poetry is of this sort. But *descriptive* poetry operates chiefly by *substitution*; by the means of sounds, which by custom have the effect of realities. Nothing is an imitation further than as it resembles some other things; and words undoubtedly have no sort of resemblance to the ideas for which they stand.

SECTION VII How WORDS influence the passions

Now, as words affect, not by any original power, but by representation, it might be supposed, that their influence over the passions should be but light; yet it is quite otherwise; for we find by experience that eloquence and poetry are as capable, nay indeed much more capable of making deep and lively impressions than any other arts, and even than nature itself in very many cases. And this arises chiefly from these three causes. First, that we take an extraordinary part in the passions of others, and that we are easily affected and brought into sympathy by any tokens which are shewn of them; and there are no tokens which can express all the circumstances of most passions so fully as words; so that if a person speaks upon any subject, he can not only convey the subject to you, but likewise the manner in which he is himself affected by it. Certain it is, that the influence of most things on our passions is not so much from the things themselves, as from our opinions concerning them; and these again depend very much on the opinions of other men, conveyable for the most part by words only. Secondly; there are many things of a very affecting nature, which can seldom occur in the reality, but the words which represent them often do; and thus they have an opportunity of making a deep impression and taking root in the mind, whilst the idea of the reality was transient; and to some perhaps never

really occurred in any shape, to whom it is notwithstanding very affecting, as war, death, famine, &c. Besides, many ideas have never been at all presented to the senses of any men but by words, as God, angels, devils, heaven and hell, all of which have however a great influence over the passions. Thirdly; by words we have it in our power to make such *combinations* as we cannot possibly do otherwise. By this power of combining we are able, by the addition of well-chosen circumstances, to give a new life and force to the simple object. In painting we may represent any fine figure we please; but we never can give it those enlivening touches which it may receive from words. To represent an angel in a picture, you can only draw a beautiful young man winged; but what painting can furnish out any thing so grand as the addition of one word, 'the angel of the *Lord*?' It is true, I have here no clear idea, but these words affect the mind more than the sensible image did, which is all I contend for. ...

As a further instance, let us consider those lines of Milton,[†] where he describes the travels of the fallen angels through their dismal habitation,

----- O'er many a dark and dreary vale

They pass'd, and many a region dolorous;

O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp;

Rock, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens and shades of death,
A universe of death.

Here is displayed the force of union in

Rocks, caves, lakes, dens, bogs, fens and shades;

which yet would lose the greatest part of their effect, if they were not the

Rocks, caves, lakes, dens, bogs, fens and shades -----
----- of *Death*.

This idea or this affection caused by a word, which nothing but a word could annex to the others, raises a very great degree of the sublime; and this sublime is raised yet higher by what follows, a '*universe of Death*.' Here are again two ideas not presentable but by language; and an union of them great and amazing beyond conception; if they may properly be called ideas which present no distinct image to the mind; -- but still it will be difficult to conceive how words can move the passions which belong to real objects, without representing these objects clearly. This is difficult to us, because we do not sufficiently distinguish, in our observations upon language, between a clear expression, and a strong

75 expression. These are frequently confounded with each other, though they are in reality extremely different. The former regards the understanding; the latter belongs to the passions. The one describes a thing as it is; the other describes it as it is felt. Now, as there is a moving tone of voice, an impassioned countenance, an agitated gesture, which affect independently of the things about which they are exerted, so there are words, and certain dispositions of words, which being peculiarly devoted to passionate subjects, and always used by those who are under the influence of any passion; they touch and move us more than those which far more clearly and distinctly express the subject matter. We yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description. . . .

1756-7

Oliver Goldsmith

c. 1730-74

Goldsmith was born in Ireland, and educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and in Edinburgh, before wandering on the continent in the mid-1750s. Despite his medical studies, he had to support himself in London by voluminous literary hack-work: reviews, histories, biographies (*Life of Nash*, 1762). The famous *Chinese Letters* republished as *The Citizen of the World* (1762) are satirical essays describing English life and characters. His short novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) tests a simple clergyman and father in a corrupt world. Two 'laughing comedies', *The Good-Natured Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), reacted against the sentimental vogue, and are still performed. A man of wide knowledge, Goldsmith was a member of Johnson's prestigious Club, and encouraged by leading members. His major poems, *The Traveller* (1764) and *The Deserted Village* (1770), develop the form of the heroic couplet. His 'Auburn' may combine childhood memories of Ireland with observations of English rural depopulation arising from recent economic and moral change: the money-making and private pleasure associated with great estates seemed to force out the traditional peasantry.

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF A MAD DOG

Good people all, of every sort,
Give ear unto my song;
And if you find it wondrous short,
It cannot hold you long.

5 In Islington there was a man,
Of whom the world might say
That still a godly race he ran,
Whene'er he went to pray.

10 A kind and gentle heart he had,
To comfort friends and foes;
The naked every day he clad,
When he put on his clothes.

And in that town a dog was found,
As many dogs there be,
15 Both mongrel, puppy, whelp and hound,
And curs of low degree.

This dog and man at first were friends;
But when a pique began,
The dog, to gain some private ends,
20 Went mad and bit the man.

Around from all the neighbouring streets
The wondering neighbours ran,
And swore the dog had lost his wits,
To bite so good a man.

25 The wound it seemed both sore and sad
To every Christian eye;
And while they swore the dog was mad,
They swore the man would die.

But soon a wonder came to light,
That showed the rogues they lied:
30 The man recovered of the bite,
The dog it was that died.

1766

[SONG]

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can soothe her melancholy,
What art can wash her guilt away?

5 The only art her guilt to cover,
To hide her shame from every eye,
To give repentance to her lover,
And wring his bosom – is to die.

1766

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed;
5 Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene;
How often have I paused on every charm,
10 The sheltered cot,* the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent[†] church that topped the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made.
15 How often have I blessed the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
20 The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round.
And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
25 The dancing pair that simply sought renown
By holding out to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter tittered round the place;
The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,
30 The matron's glance that would those looks reprove.
These were thy charms, sweet village; sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught even toil to please;
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
These were thy charms – but all these charms are fled.
35 Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,[†]
Thy sports are fled and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:

decent suitable, in harmony
lawn plain, as in 1.1. It is now only part-
cultivated (l.40)

40 One only master grasps the whole domain,
 And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain;
 No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
 But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way.
 Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
 The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
 45 Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
 And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
 Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
 And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;
 And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
 50 Far, far away, thy children leave the land.
 Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
 Where wealth accumulates and men decay;
 Princes and lords may flourish or may fade;
 A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
 55 But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
 When once destroyed, can never be supplied.
 A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
 When every rood[†] of ground maintained its man;
 For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
 60 Just gave what life required, but gave no more.
 His best companions, innocence and health;
 And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.
 But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
 Usurp the land and dispossess the swain;
 65 Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
 Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;
 And every want to opulence allied,
 And every pang that folly pays to pride.
 These gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
 Those calm desires that asked but little room,
 70 Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
 Lived in each look and brightened all the green;
 These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
 And rural mirth and manners are no more.
 75 Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour,
 Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
 Here as I take my solitary rounds,
 Amidst thy tangling walks and ruined grounds,
 And, many a year elapsed, return to view
 80 Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,

rood traditional land-measurement

Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
 Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.
 In all my wanderings round this world of care,
 In all my griefs – and God has given my share –
 85 I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
 Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
 To husband out life's taper at the close,
 And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
 I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
 90 Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill,
 Around my fire an evening group to draw,
 And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
 And, as an hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
 Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
 95 I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
 Here to return – and die at home at last.
 O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
 Retreats from care that never must be mine,
 How happy he who crowns in shades like these
 100 A youth of labour with an age of ease;
 Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
 And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly.
 For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
 Explore the mine or tempt the dangerous deep;
 105 No surly porter stands in guilty state
 To spurn imploring famine from the gate;
 But on he moves to meet his latter end,
 Angels around befriending virtue's friend;
 Bends to the grave with unperceived decay,
 110 While resignation gently slopes the way;
 And, all his prospects brightening to the last,
 His heaven commences ere the world be past!
 Sweet was the sound when oft at evening's close
 Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
 115 There as I passed with careless steps and slow,
 The mingling notes came softened from below;
 The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
 The sober herd that lowed to meet their young;
 The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
 120 The playful children just let loose from school;
 The watchdog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
 And the loud laugh that spoke the whispering wind,
 These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
 And filled each pause the nightingale had made.

- 125 But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No busy steps the grass-grown foot-way tread,
For all the bloomy flush of life is fled.
- 130 All but yon widowed, solitary thing
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;
She, wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread,
To strip the brook with mantling[†] cresses spread,
To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed and weep till morn;
135 She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain.
- Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
140 The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change, his place;[†]
145 Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
150 He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there and had his claims allowed;
155 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire and talked the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
160 And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.
Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings leaned to virtue's side;

mantling covering; in l.248, it means 'frothing'
place appointment; 11.145-6 refer to the influence of lay patrons of church livings

- 165 But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all.
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
170 Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.
Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control,
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
175 Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.
At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
180 And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal each honest rustic ran;
Even children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.
185 His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed,
Their welfare pleased him and their cares distressed;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
190 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.
Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossomed furze[†] unprofitably gay,
195 There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school;
A man severe he was and stern to view;
I knew him well, and every truant knew;
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
200 The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they laughed with counterteifed glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned;
205 Yet he was kind or, if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault;

furze gorse, grown here for pleasure, not profit

- The village all declared how much he knew;
 'Twas certain he could write and cipher* too;
 Lands he could measure, terms and tides† presage,
 And even the story ran that he could gauge.†
 In arguing too, the parson owned his skill,
 For even though vanquished, he could argue still;
 While words of learned length and thundering sound
 Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,
 And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
 That one small head could carry all he knew.
 But past is all his fame. The very spot
 Where many a time he triumphed is forgot.
 Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
 Where once the signpost caught the passing eye,
 Low lies that house† where nutbrown draughts† inspired,
 Where greybeard mirth and smiling toil retired,
 Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
 And news much older than their ale went round.
 Imagination fondly stoops to trace
 The parlour splendours of that festive place;
 The white-washed wall, the nicely-sanded floor,
 The varnished clock that clicked behind the door;
 The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
 A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;
 The pictures placed for ornament and use,
 The twelve good rules,† the royal game of goose,†
 The hearth, except when winter chilled the day,
 With aspen boughs and flowers and fennel gay;
 While broken teacups, wisely kept for show,
 Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.
 Vain, transitory splendours! Could not all
 Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall!
 Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
 An hour's importance to the poor man's heart;
 Thither no more the peasant shall repair
 To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
 No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
 No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
 No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
 Relax his ponderous strength and lean to hear;

terms and tides legal and religious seasons and festivals
gauge measure liquids
house the village inn
draughts of ale
rules of Charles I, on behaviour, often reprinted
goose a board game using dice and counters

- The host himself no longer shall be found
 Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
 Nor the coy maid, half willing to be pressed,
 Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.
 Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
 These simple blessings of the lowly train;
 To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
 One native charm than all the gloss of art;
 Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
 The soul adopts and owns their firstborn sway;
 Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
 Unenvied, unmolested, unconfin'd
 But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
 With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,
 In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
 The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
 And, even while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
 The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy.
 Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen who survey
 The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,
 'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand
 Between a splendid and an happy land.
 Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
 And shouting Folly hails them from her shore;
 Hoards, even beyond the miser's wish, abound,
 And rich men flock from all the world around.
 Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
 That leaves our useful products still the same.
 Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride
 Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
 Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
 Space for his horses, equipage and hounds;
 The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
 Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their growth;
 His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
 Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;
 Around the world each needful product flies,
 For all the luxuries the world supplies;
 While thus the land, adorned for pleasure all,
 In barren splendour feebly waits the fall.
 As some fair female unadorned and plain,
 Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,
 Slighted every borrowed charm that dress supplies,
 Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes;

But when those charms are passed, for charms are frail,
 When time advances and when lovers fail,
 She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
 In all the glaring impotence of dress;
 Thus fares the land, by luxury betrayed,
 In nature's simplest charms at first arrayed;
 But verging to decline, its splendours rise,
 Its vistas¹ strike, its palaces surprise;
 While scourged by famine from the smiling land,
 The mournful peasant leads his humble band;
 And while he sinks without one arm to save,
 The country blooms – a garden and a grave.
 Where then, ah, where shall poverty reside,
 To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride?
 If to some common's fenceless limits strayed,
 He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
 Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
 And even the bare-worn common is denied.
 If to the city sped – what waits him there?
 To see profusion that he must not share;
 To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
 To pamper luxury and thin mankind;
 To see those joys the sons of pleasure know
 Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe.
 Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,
 There the pale artist* plies the sickly trade;
 Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
 There the black gibbet[†] glooms beside the way.
 The dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign
 Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train;
 Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
 The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare;
 Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy!
 Sure these denote one universal joy!
 Are these thy serious thoughts? – Ah, turn thine eyes
 Where the poor, houseless, shivering female lies.
 She once, perhaps, in village plenty blessed,
 Has wept at tales of innocence distressed;
 Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
 Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn;

vistas man-made prospects in landscape
gibbet after public execution, bodies were
 often publicly displayed

workman

Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
 Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,
 And, pinched with cold and shrinking from the shower,
 With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
 When idly first, ambitious of the town,
 She left her wheel[†] and robes of country brown.
 Do thine, sweet Auburn, thine, the loveliest train,
 Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?
 Even now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
 At proud men's doors they ask a little bread!
 Ah, no. To distant climes, a dreary scene,
 Where half the convex world intrudes between,
 Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
 Where wild Altama[†] murmurs to their woe.
 Far different there from all that charmed before
 The various terrors of that horrid shore:
 Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
 And fiercely shed intolerable day;
 Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
 But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling;
 Those poisonous fields with rank luxuriance crowned,
 Where the dark scorpion gathers death around;
 Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
 The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
 Where crouching tigers[†] wait their hapless prey,
 And savage men more murderous still than they;
 While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
 Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies.
 Far different these from every former scene,
 The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green,
 The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
 That only sheltered thefts of harmless love.
 Good heaven! what sorrows gloomed that parting day
 That called them from their native walks away;
 When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
 Hung round their bowers and fondly looked their last,
 And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
 For seats like these beyond the western main;
 And shuddering still to face the distant deep,
 Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.

wheel spinning-wheel, symbol of rural
 economy

Altama Altamaha river in Georgia, now USA
tigers G. calls the cougar the 'American tiger'

The good old sire the first prepared to go
 To new-found worlds, and wept for others' woe;
 But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
 He only wished for worlds beyond the grave.
 375 His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
 The fond companion of his helpless years,
 Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
 And left a lover's for a father's arms.
 With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
 And blessed the cot where every pleasure rose;
 380 And kissed her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
 And clasped them close, in sorrow doubly dear;
 Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
 In all the silent manliness of grief.
 385 O luxury! thou cursed by heaven's decree,
 How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!
 How do thy potions with insidious joy
 Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
 Kingdoms, by thee to sickly greatness grown,
 390 Boast of a florid vigour not their own.
 At every draught more large and large they grow,
 A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;
 Till sapped their strength, and every part unsound,
 Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.
 395 Even now the devastation is begun,
 And half the business of destruction done;
 Even now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,
 I see the rural virtues leave the land.
 Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail
 400 That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
 Downward they move, a melancholy band,
 Pass from the shore and darken all the strand.
 Contented toil and hospitable care,
 And kind connubial tenderness are there;
 405 And piety, with wishes placed above,
 And steady loyalty and faithful love.
 And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
 Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;
 Unfit in these degenerate times of shame
 410 To catch the heart or strike for honest fame;
 Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
 My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
 Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,
 That found'st me poor at first and keep'st me so;

415 Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
 Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well.
 Farewell, and oh, where'er thy voice be tried,
 On Torno's¹ cliffs or Pambamarca's² side,
 Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
 420 Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
 Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
 Redress the rigours of th' inclement clime;
 Aid slighted truth, with thy persuasive strain
 Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
 425 Teach him that states of native strength possessed,
 Though very poor, may still be very blest;
 That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
 As ocean sweeps the laboured mole³ away;
 While self-dependent power can time defy,
 430 As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

1769

1770

From RETALIATION[†] [David Garrick]

Here lies David Garrick, describe me who can,
 An abridgement of all that was pleasant in man;
 As an actor, confessed without rival to shine,
 As a wit, if not first, in the very first line;
 5 Yet with talents like these and an excellent heart,
 The man had his failings, a dupe to his art.
 Like an ill-judging beauty his colours he spread,
 And beplastered with rouge his own natural red.
 On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting:
 10 'Twas only that, when he was off, he was acting.
 With no reason on earth to go out of his way,
 He turned and he varied full ten times a day.

¹Torno . . . *fervours* in icy Sweden;
²Pambamarca, by contrast, is in Ecuador,
 hence its *fervours* – heats
³laboured mole man-made breakwater. The
 last four lines were written by Johnson

Retaliation One of several mock-epitaphs on
 friends in reply to theirs on him: David
 Garrick had said that Goldsmith 'wrote like
 an angel, but talked like poor Poll'. Garrick
 was now the dominant actor of the age

Though secure of our hearts, yet confoundedly sick
 If they were not his own by finessing and trick,
 He cast off his friends, as a huntsman his pack,
 For he knew when he pleased he could whistle them back.

15

Of praise a mere glutton, he swallowed what came,
 And the puff of a dunce, he mistook it for fame;
 Till his relish grown callous, almost to disease,
 Who peppered the highest was surest to please.
 But let us be candid and speak out our mind:
 If dunces applauded, he paid them in kind.

20

Ye Kenricks,¹ ye Kellys and Woodfalls[†] so grave,

What a commerce was yours, while you got and you gave!

How did Grub Street[†] re-echo the shouts that you raised,
 While he was be-Rosciused[†] and you were be-praised!

25

But peace to his spirit, wherever it flies,

To act as an angel and mix with the skies:

Those poets, who owe their best fame to his skill,

Shall still be his flatterers, go where he will.

30

Old Shakespeare receive him with praise and with love,

And Beaumonts and Bens[†] be his Kellys above.

1774

William Cowper

1731–1800

The son of a Hertfordshire clergyman, Cowper attended Westminster School alongside the future satirist-cleric, Charles Churchill. Always mentally delicate, he attempted suicide when involved in a dispute over a public appointment: a religious melancholy which led to belief in his own damnation was stayed by a hope of salvation arising from evangelical Christianity. In 1765, he found protection with a clergyman, Mr Unwin, and his wife, Cowper's spiritual companion until 1796. Further mental attacks and another suicide attempt left him convinced of his own rejection by God. With the evangelical clergyman, John Newton, he had written the *Olney Hymns* (1779), including 'God moves in a mysterious way'. Collections of poems in 1782 and 1785 produced satires and the comic tale *John Gilpin*; he also translated Homer (1791). His long blank verse poem *The Task* (1785) developed from a work of mental relief into tender description and meditation centred on his quiet rural life. In his writings, charm and humanity contrast sadly with images of destruction or isolation associated with his deeper fears ('The Castaway', 1799).

From THE TASK, BOOK I: 'The Sofa'

[Pleasure in Nature]

150 Thou' knowest my praise of nature most sincere,
 And that my raptures are not conjured up
 To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
 But genuine, and art partner of them all.
 How oft upon yon eminence our pace

155 Has slackened to a pause, and we have borne
 The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
 While admiration, feeding at the eye,
 And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
 Thence with what pleasure have we just discerned

Thou Mrs Unwin

Kenricks . . . *Woodfalls* minor literary men;
 G. had produced Kelly's sentimental comedy
False Delicacy in 1768
Grub Street the centre of literary drudgery
be-Rosciused Roscius, great Roman comic
 actor of first century BC
Ben Jonson (placing Garrick with the great
 Elizabethan dramatists)

- 160 The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His labouring team, that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminished to a boy!
- 165 Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along its sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
Stand, never overlooked, our favourite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
- 170 While far beyond, and overthwart the stream
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
- 175 Just unquates upon the listening ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages, remote.
Scenes must be beautiful, which, daily viewed,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.
Praise justly due to those that I describe.
- 180 Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid Nature. Mighty winds,
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind;
Unnumbered branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast fluttering, all at once.
- 190 Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighbouring fountain, or of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and, chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass, that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,
But animated nature sweeter still,
To soothe and satisfy the human ear.
- 200 Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one
The live-long night: nor these alone, whose notes
Nice-fingered art must emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime

- 205 In still-repeated circles, screaming loud,
The jay, the pie, and even the boding owl
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,
And only there, please highly for their sake. . . .

[A Harsher Scene]

- The earth was made so various, that the mind
Of desuitor man, studious of change,
And pleased with novelty, might be indulged.
Prospects, however lovely, may be seen
Till half their beauties fade; the weary sight,
Too well acquainted with their smiles, slides off,
Fastidious, seeking less familiar scenes.
- 510 Then snug enclosures in the sheltered vale,
Where frequent hedges intercept the eye,
Delight us; happy to renounce awhile,
Not senseless of its charms, what still we love,
That such short absence may endear it more.
Then forests, or the savage rock, may please,
That hides the sea-mew in his hollow clefts
Above the reach of man. His hoary head,
Conspicuous many a league, the mariner
Bound homeward, and in hope already there,
Greets with three cheers exulting. At his waist
A girdle of half-withered shrubs he shows,
And at his feet the baffled billows die.
- 525 The common, overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deformed,
And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf
Smells fresh, and, rich in odoriferous herbs
And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
With luxury of unexpected sweets.
- 530 There often wanders one, whom better days
Saw better clad, in cloak of satin trimmed
With lace, and hat with splendid ribband bound.
A serving maid was she, and fell in love
With one who left her, went to sea, and died.
Her fancy followed him through foaming waves
To distant shores; and she would sit and weep
- 540

At what a sailor suffers; fancy, too,
 Delusive most where warmest wishes are,
 Would oft anticipate his glad return,
 And dream of transports she was not to know.
 She heard the doleful tidings of his death –
 And never smiled again! And now she roams
 The dreary waste; there spends the livelong day,
 And there, unless when charity forbids,
 The livelong night. A tattered apron hides,
 Worn as a cloak, and hardly hides, a gown
 More tattered still; and both but ill conceal
 A bosom heaved with never-ceasing sighs.
 She begs an idle pin of all she meets,
 And hoards them in her sleeve; but needful food,
 Though pressed with hunger oft, or comelier clothes,
 Though pinched with cold, asks never. – Kate is crazed! . . .

From BOOK VI: 'The Winter Walk at Noon'

The night was winter in his roughest mood;
 The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon
 Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
 And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
 The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
 And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
 Without a cloud, and white without a speck
 The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
 Again the harmony comes o'er the vale;
 And through the trees I view th' embattled tower
 Whence all the music. I again perceive
 The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
 And settle in soft musings as I tread
 The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,
 Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
 The roof, though moveable through all its length
 As the wind sways it, has yet well sufficed,
 And, intercepting in their silent fall
 The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
 No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
 The redbreast warbles still, but is content
 With slender notes, and more than half suppressed:

Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
 From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
 From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
 That tinkle in the withered leaves below.
 Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
 Charms more than silence. Meditation here
 May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
 May give an useful lesson to the head,
 And learning wiser grow without his books.
 Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
 Have oft-times no connection. Knowledge dwells
 In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
 Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
 Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
 The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
 Till smoothed and squared and fitted to its place,
 Does but encumber whom it seems t' enrich.
 Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;
 Wisdom is humble that he knows no more. . . .

1785

THE CASTAWAY†

enwrapped

Obscurest night involved* the sky,
 Th' Atlantic billows roared,
 When such a destined wretch as I,
 Washed headlong from on board,
 Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
 His floating home for ever left.
 No braver chief could Albion boast
 Than he with whom he went,
 Nor ever ship left Albion's coast
 With warmer wishes sent.
 He loved them both, but both in vain,
 Nor him beheld nor her again.

The Castaway Cowper read this incident in
 Lord Anson's *Voyage round the World*
 (1748)

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
 Expert to swim, he lay;
 Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
 Or courage die away;
 But waged with death a lasting strife,
 Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had failed
 To check the vessel's course,
 But so the furious blast prevailed,
 That, pitiless perforce,
 They left their outcast mate behind,
 And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford;
 And, such as storms allow,
 The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
 Delayed not to bestow.

But he (they knew) nor ship nor shore,
 Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seemed, could he
 Their haste himself condemn,
 Aware that flight, in such a sea,
 Alone could rescue them;
 Yet bitter felt it still to die
 Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
 In ocean, self-upheld;
 And so long he, with unspent power,
 His destiny repelled;
 And ever, as the minutes flew,
 Entreated help, or cried – 'Adieu!'

At length, his transient respite past,
 His comrades, who before
 Had heard his voice in every blast,
 Could catch the sound no more.
 For then, by toil subdued, he drank
 The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him: but the page
 Of narrative sincere,

That tells his name, his worth, his age,
 Is wet with Anson's tear.
 And tears by bards or heroes shed
 Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
 Descanting on his fate,
 To give the melancholy theme
 A more enduring date:
 But misery still delights to trace
 Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,
 No light propitious shone,
 When, snatched from all effectual aid,
 We perished, each alone:
 But I beneath a rougher sea,
 And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

1799 1803

James Macpherson

1736–96

Educated at Aberdeen and Edinburgh Universities, Macpherson had published his own poetry before the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760) allegedly collected in the Scottish Highlands and translated from Gaelic. In an age whose increasing value on primitive literature saw Bishop Percy's ballad collections, and his and Gray's interest in Norse poetry, it excited the imagination and flattered the Scottish cultural sense that Macpherson should 'find' and translate two Scottish historical epic poems by 'Ossian': *Fingal* (1762) and *Temora* (1763) were admired at home (David Hume and Adam Smith) and abroad (Schiller, Goethe, Napoleon), where they had an extraordinary influence. The hostile camp was led by Johnson, whose Scottish journey confirmed his view (which appears to be near the truth) that the Ossianic poems were a lash-up of Macpherson's inventions and some traditional scraps. The reception of Ossian is a remarkable episode in the history of taste. (See also Johnson's defiant letter to Macpherson on p. 347.)

From FINGAL. † *An Ancient Epic Poem* [*Battle is joined*]

'Peace,' said Cuthullin, 'to the souls of the heroes! their deeds were great in fight. Let them ride around me on clouds. Let them show their features of war. My soul shall then be firm in danger; mine arm like the thunder of heaven! But be thou on a moon-beam, O Morna! near the window of my rest; when my thoughts are of peace; when the din of arms is past. Gather the strength of the tribes! Move to the wars of Erin! Attend the car of my battles! Rejoice in the noise of my course! Place three spears by my side: follow the bounding of my steeds! That

Fingal Cuthullin, an Irish leader, prepares to do battle with the invader Swaran, King of Lochlin

my soul may be strong in my friends, when battle darkens round the beams of my steel!

As rushes a stream of foam from the dark shady deep of Cromla; when the thunder is travelling above, and dark-brown night sits on half the hill. Through the breaches of the tempest look forth the dim faces of ghosts. So fierce, so vast, so terrible rushed on the sons of Erin. The chief, like a whale of ocean, whom all his billows pursue, poured valour forth as a stream, rolling his might along the shore. The sons of Lochlin heard the noise, as the sound of a winter-storm. Swaran struck his bossy shield: he called the son of Arno. 'What murmur rolls along the hill, like the gathered flies of the eve? The sons of Erin descend, or rustling winds roar in the distant wood! Such is the noise of Gormal, before the white tops of my waves arise. O Son of Arno, ascend the hill; view the dark face of the heath!'

He went. He, trembling, swift returned. His eyes rolled wildly round. His heart beat high against his side. His words were faltering, broken, slow. 'Arise, son of ocean, arise, chief of the dark-brown shields! I see the dark, the mountain-stream of battle! The deep-moving strength of the sons of Erin! The car, the car of war comes on, like the flame of death! the rapid car of Cuthullin, the noble son of Semo! It bends behind like a wave near a rock; like the sun-streaked mist of the heath. Its sides are embossed with stones, and sparkle like the sea round the boat of night. Of polished yew is its beam; its seat of the smoothest bone. The sides are replenished with spears; the bottom is the footstool of heroes! Before the right side of the car is seen the snorting horse! the high-manned, broad-breasted, proud, wide-leaping, strong steed of the hill. Loud and resounding is his hoof; the spreading of his mane above is like a stream of spray on a ridge of rocks. Bright are the sides of the steed! His name is Sulin-Sifadda!'

'Before the left side of the car is seen the snorting horse! The thin-maned, high-headed, strong-hoofed, fleet, bounding son of the hill: his name is Dufornnal, among the stormy sons of the sword! A thousand thongs bind the car on high. Hard polished bits shine in a wreath of foam. Thin thongs, bright studded with gems, bend on the stately necks of the steeds. The steeds that like wreaths of mist fly over the streamy vales! The wildness of deer is in their course, the strength of eagles descending on their prey. Their noise is like the blast of winter, on the sides of the snow-headed Gormal.

'Within the car is seen the chief; the strong-armed son of the sword. The hero's name is Cuthullin, son of Semo, king of shells. His red cheek is like my polished yew. The look of his blue-rolling eye is wide beneath the dark arch of his brow. His hair flies from his head like a flame, as bending forward he wields the spear. Fly, king of ocean, fly! He comes, like a storm, along the streamy vale!'

‘When did I fly?’ replied the king. ‘When fled Swaran from the battle of spears? When did I shrink from danger, chief of the little soul? I met the storm of Gormal, when the foam of my waves beat high. I met the storm of the clouds; shall Swaran fly from a hero? Were Fingal himself before me, my soul should not darken with fear. Arise to battle, my thousands! pour round me like the echoing main. Gather round the bright steel of your king; strong as the rocks of my land; that meet the storm with joy, and stretch their dark pines to the wind!’

Like autumn’s dark storms, pouring from two echoing hills, towards each other approached the heroes. Like two deep streams from high rocks meeting, mixing, roaring on the plain; loud, rough and dark in battle meet Lochlin and Innis-tail. Chief mixes his strokes with chief, and man with man; steel, clanging, sounds on steel. Helmets are cleft on high. Blood bursts and smokes around. Strings murmur on the polished yews. Darts rush along the sky. Spears fall like the circles of light, which gild the face of night. As the noise of the troubled ocean, when roll the waves on high. As the last peal of thunder in heaven, such is the din of war! Though Cormac’s hundred bards were there to give the fight to song; feeble was the voice of a hundred bards to send the deaths to future times! For many were the deaths of heroes; wide poured the blood of the brave!

Mourn, ye sons of song, mourn the death of the noble Sithállin. Let the sighs of Fiona arise, on the lone plains of her lovely Ardan. They fell, like two hinds of the desert, by the hands of the mighty Swaran; when, in the midst of thousands, he roared; like the shrill spirit of a storm. He sits dim, on the clouds of the north, and enjoys the death of the mariner. Nor slept thy hand by thy side, chief of the isle of mist! many were the deaths of thine arm, Cuthullin, thou son of Semo! His sword was like the beam of heaven when it pierces the sons of the vale; when the people are blasted and fall, and all the hills are burning around. Dufroinnal snorted over the bodies of heroes. Sifadda bathed his hoof in blood. The battle lay behind them, as groves overturned in the desert of Cromla, when the blast has passed the heath, laden with the spirits of night!

Weep on the rocks of roaring winds, O maid of Inistore! Bend thy fair head over the waves, thou lovelier than the ghost of the hills, when it moves, in a sun-beam at noon, over the silence of Morven! He is fallen! thy youth is low! pale beneath the sword of Cuthullin! No more shall valour raise thy love to match the blood of kings. Trenar, graceful Trenar died, O maid of Inistore! His grey dogs are howling at home! they see his passing ghost. His bow is in the hall unstrung. No sound is in the hill of his hinds!

As roll a thousand waves to the rocks, so Swaran’s host came on. As meets a rock a thousand waves, so Erin met Swaran of spears. Death raises all his voices around, and mixes with the sounds of shields. Each hero is a pillar of darkness; the sword a beam of fire in his hand. The field echoes from wing to wing, as a hundred hammers that rise, by turns, on the red son of the furnace. Who are these on Lena’s heath, these so gloomy and dark? Who are these like two clouds, and their swords like lightning above them? The little hills are troubled around: the rocks tremble with all their moss. Who is it but Ocean’s son and the car-borne chief of Erin? Many are the anxious eyes of their friends, as they see them dim on the heath. But night conceals the chiefs in clouds, and ends the dreadful fight!

It was on Cromla’s shaggy side that Dorglas had placed the deer; the early fortune of the chase, before the heroes left the hill. A hundred youths collect the heath; ten warriors wake the fire; three hundred choose the polished stones. The feast is smoking wide! Cuthullin, chief of Erin’s war, resumed his mighty soul. He stood upon his beamy spear, and spoke to the son of songs, to Carril of other times, the grey-haired son of Kinfena. ‘Is this feast spread for me alone and the king of Lochlin on Erin’s shore; far from the deer of his hills, and sounding halls of his feasts? Rise, Carril of other times; carry my words to Swaran. Tell him from the roaring of waters, that Cuthullin gives his feast. Here let him listen to the sound of my groves, amidst the clouds of night. For cold and bleak the blustering winds rush over the foam of his seas. Here let him praise the trembling harp, hear the songs of heroes!’ . . .

Edward Gibbon

1737–94

The *Memoirs* or *Autobiography* pieced together from various drafts after Gibbon's death are a major if selective source of information. A learned fourteen-year-old, he went to Magdalen College, Oxford, which he found sunk in indolence and prejudice in his fourteen-month stay. An intellectual convert to Catholicism, he reconverted to Protestantism on being sent to Lausanne, where he formed a romantic attachment which his father persuaded him to break. His study of ancient and modern literature produced a French *Essai* on the topic (1761). Meanwhile he served as captain in the Hampshire Militia. On a visit to Rome in 1764, he decided to write the *History of the Decline and Fall* of the city, later extended to the empire. After years of research, he published his great work in six volumes, 1776–88. During much of this period he was an MP, and for several years a minor official, but he was never a prominent politician; in 1774 he became a member of Johnson's Club; from 1783–93 he lived mainly in Switzerland. Gibbon's vast learning and magisterial prose made the *Decline and Fall* the greatest English history, though its ironic, sceptical manner caused offence to many with its implications that Rome fell as much through Christianity as barbarian attack: his enlightenment belief is in the progress of a rational civilisation. The *Memoirs* too are fascinating partly because of their ironic reticence about his emotional life; he never married.

From MEMOIRS OF MY LIFE

[*Gibbon at Oxford*]

A traveller who visits Oxford or Cambridge is surprised and edified by the apparent order and tranquillity that prevail in the seats of the English muses. In the most celebrated universities of Holland, Germany and Italy, the students, who swarm from different countries, are loosely dispersed in private lodgings at the houses of the burghers; they dress

5

according to their fancy and fortune; and, in the intemperate quarrels of youth and wine, their swords, though less frequently than of old, are sometimes stained with each other's blood. The use of arms is banished from our English universities; the uniform habit of the academics, the square cap and black gown, is adapted to the civil and even clerical profession; and from the doctor in divinity to the undergraduate, the degrees of learning and age are externally distinguished. Instead of being scattered in a town, the students of Oxford and Cambridge are united in colleges; their maintenance is provided at their own expense, or that of the founders; and the stated hours of the hall and chapel represent the discipline of a regular, and, as it were, a religious community. The eyes of the traveller are attracted by the size or beauty of the public edifices; and the principal colleges appear to be so many palaces which a liberal nation has erected and endowed for the habitation of science.¹ My own introduction to the University of Oxford forms a new era in my life, and at the distance of forty years I still remember my first emotions of surprise and satisfaction. In my fifteenth year I felt myself suddenly raised from a boy to a man; the persons whom I respected as my superiors in age and academical rank entertained me with every mark of attention and civility; and my vanity was flattered by the velvet cap and silk gown which discriminate a gentleman-commoner from a plebeian student. A decent allowance, more money than a schoolboy had ever seen, was at my own disposal, and I might command among the tradesmen of Oxford an indefinite and dangerous latitude of credit. A key was delivered into my hands which gave me the free use of a numerous and learned library; my apartment consisted of three elegant and well-furnished rooms in the new building, a stately pile, of Magdalen College; and the adjacent walks,² had they been frequented by Plato's³ disciples, might have been compared to the Attic shade on the banks of the Ilissus.⁴ Such was the fair prospect of my entrance (April 3 1752) into the University of Oxford. . . . [Quotes Bishop Lowth's pleasure in Oxford]

The expression of gratitude is a virtue and a pleasure: a liberal mind will delight to cherish and celebrate the memory of its parents; and the teachers of science are the parents of the mind. I applaud the filial piety which it is impossible for me to imitate; since I must not confess an imaginary debt to assume the merit of a just or generous retribution.

To the University of Oxford I acknowledge no obligation, and she will as cheerfully renounce me for a son, as I am willing to disclaim her for a mother. I spent fourteen months at Magdalen College; they

science learning in general
walks Magdalen has beautiful grounds by the
river

Plato c. 428–348 bc: philosopher-teacher in
Athens
Ilissus river near Athens

proved the fourteen months the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life. The reader will pronounce between the school and the scholar; but I cannot affect to believe that Nature had disqualified me for all literary pursuits. The specious and ready excuse of my tender age, imperfect preparation and hasty departure, may doubtless be alleged; nor do I wish to defraud such excuses of their proper weight. Yet in my sixteenth year I was not devoid of capacity or application; even my childish reading had displayed an early though blind propensity for books; and the shallow flood might have been taught to flow in a deep channel and a clear stream. In the discipline of a well-constituted academy, under the guidance of skilful and vigilant professors, I should gradually have risen from translations to originals, from the Latin to the Greek classics, from dead languages to living science: my hours would have been occupied by useful and agreeable studies; the wanderings of fancy would have been restrained, and I should have escaped the temptations of idleness which finally precipitated my departure from Oxford.

Perhaps, in a separate annotation I may coolly examine the fabulous and real antiquities of our sister universities, a question which has kindled such fierce and foolish disputes among their fanatic sons. In the meanwhile it will be acknowledged that these venerable bodies are sufficiently old to partake of all the prejudices and infirmities of age. The schools of Oxford and Cambridge were founded in a dark age of false and barbarous science; and they are still tainted with the vices of their origin. Their primitive discipline was adapted to the education of priests and monks; and the government still remains in the hands of the clergy, an order of men whose manners are remote from the present world, and whose eyes are dazzled by the light of philosophy. The legal incorporation of these societies by the charters of popes and kings had given them a monopoly of the public instruction; and the spirit of monopolists is narrow, lazy and oppressive: their work is more costly and less productive than that of independent artists; and the new improvements so eagerly grasped by the competition of freedom are admitted with slow and sullen reluctance in those proud corporations, above the fear of a rival, and below the confession of an error. We may scarcely hope that any reformation will be a voluntary act, and so deeply are they rooted in law and prejudice that even the omnipotence of Parliament would shrink from an enquiry into the state and abuses of the two universities. . . .

In all the universities of Europe except our own, the languages and sciences are distributed among a numerous list of effective professors: the students, according to their taste, their calling, and their diligence, apply themselves to the proper masters; and in the annual repetition of public and private lectures, these masters are assiduously employed. Our curiosity may enquire what number of professors has been instituted

at Oxford (for I shall now confine myself to my own university); by whom are they appointed, and what may be the probable chances of merit or incapacity? How many are stationed to the three faculties,¹ and how many are left for the liberal arts? What is the form, and what the substance of their lessons? But all these questions are silenced by one short and singular answer. 'That in the University of Oxford, the greater part of the public professors have for these many years given up altogether even the pretence of teaching.' Incredible as the fact may appear, I must rest my belief on the positive and impartial evidence of a philosopher who had himself resided at Oxford. Dr Adam Smith² assigns as the cause of their indolence that, instead of being paid by voluntary contributions, which would urge them to increase the number, and to deserve the gratitude of their pupils, the Oxford professors are secure in the enjoyment of a fixed stipend, without the necessity of labour or the apprehension of control. . . .

The College of St Mary Magdalen (it is vulgarly pronounced Maudlin) was founded in the fifteenth century by a Bishop of Winchester; and now consists of a President, forty fellows, and a number of inferior students. It is esteemed one of the largest and most wealthy of our academical corporations, which may be compared to the Benedictine abbey of Catholic countries; and I have loosely heard that the estates belonging to Magdalen College, which are leased by those indulgent landlords at small quit-rents³ and occasional fines, might be raised, in the hands of private avarice, to an annual revenue of near thirty thousand pounds. Our colleges are supposed to be schools of science as well as of education; nor is it unreasonable to expect that a body of literary men, addicted to a life of celibacy, exempt from the care of their own subsistence, and amply provided with books, should devote their leisure to the prosecution of study, and that some effects of their studies should be manifested to the world. The shelves of their library groan under the weight of the Benedictine folios, of the editions of the fathers⁴ and the collections of the Middle Ages, which have issued from the single Abbey of St Germain des Prés at Paris. A composition of genius must be the offspring of one mind; but such works of industry as may be divided among many hands, and must be continued during many years, are the peculiar province of a laborious community. If I enquire into the manufactures of the monks at Magdalen, if I extend the enquiry to the other colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, a silent blush, or a scornful frown will be the only reply. The fellows or monks of my time were decent easy men who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the

three faculties theology, law, medicine quit-rent paid in lieu of other services
Smith 1723-90: Scottish philosopher and fathers of the church: early Christian writers
economist

130 founder. Their days were filled by a series of uniform employments: the chapel and the hall, the coffee-house and the common room, till they retired, weary and well-satisfied, to a long slumber. From the toil of reading or thinking or writing they had absolved their conscience; and the first shoots of learning and ingenuity withered on the ground without yielding any fruit to the owners or the public. . . .

135 As a gentleman-commoner I was admitted to the society of the fellows, and fondly expected that some questions of literature would be the amusing and instructive topics of their discourse. Their conversation stagnated in a round of college business, Tory politics, personal stories and private scandal; their dull and deep potations excused the brisk intemperance of youth; and their constitutional toasts were not expressive of the most lively loyalty[†] for the House of Hanover. . . .

140 The silence of the Oxford professors, which deprives the youth of public instruction, is imperfectly supplied by the tutors, as they are styled,[‡] of the several colleges. Instead of confining themselves to a single science, which had satisfied the ambition of Burman or Bernouilli,[†] they teach or promise to teach either history or mathematics, or ancient literature or moral philosophy; and as it is possible that they may be defective in all, it is highly probable that of some they will be ignorant.

145 They are paid indeed by private contributions; but their appointment depends on the head of the house: their diligence is voluntary, and will consequently be languid, while the pupils themselves and their parents are not indulged in the liberty of choice or change. The first tutor into whose hands I was resigned, appears to have been one of the best of the tribe. Dr Waldegrave was a learned and pious man, of a mild disposition, strict morals and abstemious life, who seldom mingled in the politics or the jollity of the college. But his knowledge of the world was confined to the university; his learning was of the last, rather than the present age, his temper was indolent; his faculties, which were not of the first rate, had been relaxed by the climate; and he was satisfied, like his fellows, with the slight and superficial discharge of an important trust. As soon as my tutor had sounded the insufficiency of his disciple in school-learning he proposed that we should read every morning from ten to eleven the comedies of Terence.[†] The sum of my improvement in the university of Oxford is confined to three or four Latin plays; and even the study of an elegant classic which might have been illustrated by a comparison of ancient and modern theatres was reduced to a dry and literal interpretation of the author's text. . . .

loyalty Oxford sympathies were traditionally Jacobite
Burman . . . Bernouilli Continental scholars in classics and mathematics
Terence Roman comic dramatist (c. 190–159 BC)

[Gibbon in Love]

1 I hesitate from the apprehension of ridicule, when I approach the delicate subject of my early love. By this word I do not mean the polite attention, the gallantry without hope or design, which has originated from the spirit of chivalry, and is interwoven with the texture of French manners. I do not confine myself to the grosser appetite which our pride may affect to disdain, because it has been implanted by Nature in the whole animal creation: *Amor omnibus idem* [Love is the same for all]. The discovery of a sixth sense, the first consciousness of manhood, is a very interesting moment of our lives: but it less properly belongs to the memoirs of an individual, than to the natural history of the species. I understand by this passion the union of desire, friendship and tenderness, which is inflamed by a single female, which prefers her to the rest of her sex, and which seeks her possession as the supreme or the sole happiness of our being. I need not blush at recollecting the object of my choice, and though my love was disappointed of success, I am rather proud that I was once capable of feeling such a pure and exalted sentiment. The personal attractions of Mademoiselle Suzanne Curchod were embellished by the virtues and talents of the mind. Her fortune was humble but her family was respectable: her mother, a native of France, had preferred her religion to her country; the profession of her father did not extinguish the moderation and philosophy of his temper, and he lived content with a small salary and laborious duty in the obscure lot of minister of Crassy, in the mountains that separate the Pays de Vaud from the County of Burgundy. In the solitude of a sequestered village he bestowed a liberal and even learned education on his only daughter; she surpassed his hopes by her proficiency in the sciences and languages; and in her short visits to some relations at Lausanne, the wit and beauty and erudition of Mademoiselle Curchod were the theme of universal applause. The report of such a prodigy awakened my curiosity; I saw and loved. I found her learned without pedantry, lively in conversation, pure in sentiment, and elegant in manners; and the first sudden emotion was fortified by the habits and knowledge of a more familiar acquaintance. She permitted me to make her two or three visits at her father's house: I passed some happy days in the mountains of Burgundy, and her parents honourably encouraged a connection which might raise their daughter above want and dependence. In a calm retirement the gay vanity of youth no longer fluttered in her bosom; she listened to the voice of truth and passion; and I might presume to hope that I had made some impression on a virtuous heart.

At Crassy and Lausanne I indulged my dream of felicity; but on my return to England I soon discovered that my father would not hear of

10 this strange alliance, and that without his consent I was myself destitute and helpless. After a painful struggle I yielded to my fate: I sighed¹ as a lover, I obeyed as a son; the remedies of absence and time were at length effectual; and my love subsided in friendship and esteem. The minister of Crassy soon afterwards died; his stipend died with him; his daughter retired to Geneva where, by teaching young ladies, she earned a hard subsistence for herself and her mother; but in her lowest distress she maintained a spotless reputation and a dignified behaviour. The Duchess of Grafton (now Lady Ossory) has often told me that she had nearly engaged Mademoiselle Curchod as a governess, and her declining a life of servitude was most probably blamed by the wisdom of her short-sighted friends. A rich banker of Paris, a citizen of Geneva, had the good fortune and good sense to discover and possess this inestimable treasure; and in the capital of taste and luxury she resisted the temptations of wealth as she had sustained the hardships of indigence. The genius of her husband has exalted him to the most conspicuous station in Europe; in every change of prosperity and disgrace he has reclined on the bosom of a faithful friend; and Mademoiselle Curchod is now the wife of M. Necker, the Minister¹ and perhaps the legislator of the French Monarchy.

1789-93

1796

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE From Chapter 38

General Observations on the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West

The Greeks, after their country had been reduced into a province, imputed the triumphs of Rome, not to the merit, but to the FORTUNE, of the republic. The inconstant goddess, who so blindly distributes and resumes her favours, had *now* consented (such was the language of envious flattery) to resign her wings, to descend from her globe, and to fix her firm and immutable throne on the banks of the Tiber. A wiser Greek, who has composed, with a philosophic spirit, the memorable history of his own times, deprived his countrymen of this vain and delusive comfort, by opening to their view the deep foundations of the

I sighed added from another draft

Minister of Finance, under Louis XVI

10 greatness of Rome. The fidelity of the citizens to each other and to the state was confirmed by the habits of education and the prejudices of religion. Honour, as well as virtue, was the principle of the republic; the ambitious citizens laboured to deserve the solemn glories of a triumph; and the ardour of the Roman youth was kindled into active emulation as often as they beheld the domestic images of their ancestors. 15 The temperate struggles of the patricians and plebeians¹ had finally established the firm and equal balance of the constitution, which united the freedom of popular assemblies with the authority and wisdom of a senate and the executive powers of a real magistrate. When the consul¹ displayed the standard of the republic, each citizen bound himself, by the obligation of an oath, to draw his sword in the cause of his country till he had discharged the sacred duty by a military service of ten years. This wise institution continually poured into the field the rising generations of freemen and soldiers; and their numbers were reinforced by the warlike and populous states of Italy, who, after a brave resistance, had yielded to the valour and embraced the alliance of the Romans. 25 The sage historian, who excited the virtue of the younger Scipio and beheld the ruin of Carthage, has accurately described their military system; their levies, arms, exercises, subordination, marches, encampments; and the invincible legion, superior in active strength to the Macedonian phalanx of Philip and Alexander. From these institutions of peace and war Polybius¹ has deduced the spirit and success of a people incapable of fear and impatient of repose. The ambitious design of conquest, which might have been defeated by the seasonable conspiracy of mankind, was attempted and achieved; and the perpetual violation of justice was maintained by the political virtues of prudence and courage. The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the Ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome. 40

The rise of a city, which swelled into an empire, may deserve, as a singular prodigy, the reflection of a philosophic mind. But the decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness. Prosperity ripened the principle of decay; the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest; and as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight. The story of its ruin is simple and obvious; and instead of inquiring *why* the Roman empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted so long. The

15 patricians and plebeians aristocrats and common people
40 Polybius Greek historian of third century BC wars against Carthage
consul joint chief-magistrate

victorious legions, who, in distant wars, acquired the vices of strangers and mercenaries, first oppressed the freedom of the republic, and afterwards violated the majesty of the purple. The emperors, anxious for their personal safety and the public peace, were reduced to the base expedient of corrupting the discipline which rendered them alike formidable to their sovereign and to the enemy; the vigour of the military government was relaxed and finally dissolved by the partial institutions of Constantine,[†] and the Roman world was overwhelmed by a deluge of barbarians.

The decay of Rome has been frequently ascribed to the translation of the seat of empire; but this history has already shown that the powers of government were *divided*, rather than *removed*. The throne of Constantinople was erected in the East; while the West was still possessed by a series of emperors who held their residence in Italy, and claimed their equal inheritance of the legions and provinces. This dangerous novelty impaired the strength and fomented the vices of a double reign: the instruments of an oppressive and arbitrary system were multiplied; and a vain emulation of luxury, not of merit, was introduced and supported between the degenerate successors of Theodosius.[†] Extreme distress, which unites the virtue of a free people, embitters the factions of a declining monarchy. The hostile favourites of Arcadius[†] and Honorius[†] betrayed the republic to its common enemies; and the Byzantine court beheld with indifference, perhaps with pleasure, the disgrace of Rome, the misfortunes of Italy, and the loss of the West. Under the succeeding reigns the alliance of the two empires was restored; but the aid of the Oriental Romans was tardy, doubtful, and ineffectual; and the national schism of the Greeks and Latins was enlarged by the perpetual difference of language and manners, of interests, and even of religion. Yet the salutary event approved in some measure the judgment of Constantine. During a long period of decay his impregnable city repelled the victorious armies of barbarism, protected the wealth of Asia, and commanded, both in peace and war, the important straits which connect the Euxine and Mediterranean seas. The foundation of Constantinople more essentially contributed to the preservation of the East than to the ruin of the West.

As the happiness of a *future* life is the great object of religion, we may hear without surprise or scandal that the introduction, or at least the abuse of Christianity, had some influence on the decline and fall of the Roman empire. The clergy successfully preached the doctrines of patience and pusillanimity; the active virtues of society were discouraged; and the last remains of military spirit were buried in the cloister:

Constantine Emperor 311–37; founder of Constantinople; Christian convert

Theodosius Emperor 378–95; Arcadius and Honorius, his sons, reigned in East and West

a large portion of public and private wealth was consecrated to the specious demands of charity and devotion; and the soldiers' pay was lavished on the useless multitudes of both sexes who could only plead the merits of abstinence and chastity. Faith, zeal, curiosity, and the more earthly passions of malice and ambition, kindled the flame of theological discord; the church, and even the state, were distracted by religious factions, whose conflicts were sometimes bloody and always implacable; the attention of the emperors was diverted from camps to synods; the Roman world was oppressed by a new series of tyranny; and the persecuted sects became the secret enemies of their country. Yet party-spirit, however pernicious or absurd, is a principle of union as well as of dissension. The bishops, from eighteen hundred pulpits, inculcated the duty of passive obedience to a lawful and orthodox sovereign; their frequent assemblies and perpetual correspondence maintained the communion of distant churches; and the benevolent temper of the Gospel was strengthened, though confined, by the spiritual alliance of the catholics. The sacred indolence of the monks was devoutly embraced by a servile and effeminate age; but if superstition had not afforded a decent retreat, the same vices would have tempted the unworthy Romans to desert, from baser motives, the standard of the republic. Religious precepts are easily obeyed which indulge and sanctify the natural inclinations of their votaries; but the pure and genuine influence of Christianity may be traced in its beneficial, though imperfect, effects on the barbarian proselytes of the North. If the decline of the Roman empire was hastened by the conversion of Constantine, his victorious religion broke the violence of the fall, and mollified the ferocious temper of the conquerors.

This awful revolution may be usefully applied to the instruction of the present age. It is the duty of a patriot to prefer and promote the exclusive interest and glory of his native country: but a philosopher may be permitted to enlarge his views, and to consider Europe as one great republic, whose various inhabitants have attained almost the same level of politeness and cultivation. The balance of power will continue to fluctuate, and the prosperity of our own or the neighbouring kingdoms may be alternately exalted or depressed; but these partial events cannot essentially injure our general state of happiness, the system of arts, and laws, and manners, which so advantageously distinguish, above the rest of mankind, the Europeans and their colonies. The savage nations of the globe are the common enemies of civilised society; and we may inquire, with anxious curiosity, whether Europe is still threatened with a repetition of those calamities which formerly oppressed the arms and institutions of Rome. Perhaps the same reflections will illustrate the fall of that mighty empire, and explain the probable causes of our actual security.

I. The Romans were ignorant of the extent of their danger and the number of their enemies. Beyond the Rhine and Danube the northern countries of Europe and Asia were filled with innumerable tribes of hunters and shepherds, poor, voracious, and turbulent; bold in arms, and impatient to ravish the fruits of industry. The barbarian world was agitated by the rapid impulse of war; and the peace of Gaul or Italy was shaken by the distant revolutions of China. The Huns, who fled before a victorious enemy, directed their march towards the West; and the torrent was swelled by the gradual accession of captives and allies. The flying tribes who yielded to the Huns assumed in *their* turn the spirit of conquest; the endless column of barbarians pressed on the Roman empire with accumulated weight; and, if the foremost were destroyed, the vacant space was instantly replenished by new assailants. Such formidable emigrations no longer issue from the North; and the long repose, which has been imputed to the decrease of population, is the happy consequence of the progress of arts and agriculture. Instead of some rude villages thinly scattered among its woods and morasses, Germany now produces a list of two thousand three hundred walled towns: the Christian kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Poland have been successively established; and the Hanse merchants, with the Teutonic knights, have extended their colonies along the coast of the Baltic as far as the Gulf of Finland. From the Gulf of Finland to the Eastern Ocean, Russia now assumes the form of a powerful and civilised empire. The plough, the loom, and the forge are introduced on the banks of the Volga, the Oby, and the Lena; and the fiercest of the Tartar hordes have been taught to tremble and obey. The reign of independent barbarism is now contracted to a narrow span; and the remnant of Calmucks or Uzbecks, whose forces may be almost numbered, cannot seriously excite the apprehensions of the great republic of Europe. Yet this apparent security should not tempt us to forget that new enemies and unknown dangers may *possibly* arise from some obscure people, scarcely visible in the map of the world. The Arabs or Saracens, who spread their conquests from India to Spain, had languished in poverty and contempt till Mahomet breathed into those savage bodies the soul of enthusiasm.

II. The empire of Rome was firmly established by the singular and perfect coalition of its members. The subject nations, resigning the hope and even the wish of independence, embraced the character of Roman citizens; and the provinces of the West were reluctantly torn by the barbarians from the bosom of their mother country. But this union was purchased by the loss of national freedom and military spirit; and the servile provinces, destitute of life and motion, expected their safety from the mercenary troops and governors who were directed by the orders of a distant court. The happiness of an hundred millions depended

on the personal merit of one or two men, perhaps children, whose minds were corrupted by education, luxury, and despotic power. The deepest wounds were inflicted on the empire during the minorities of the sons and grandsons of Theodosius; and, after those incapable princes seemed to attain the age of manhood, they abandoned the church to the bishops, the state to the eunuchs, and the provinces to the barbarians. Europe is now divided into twelve powerful, though unequal kingdoms, three respectable commonwealths, and a variety of smaller, though independent states: the chances of royal and ministerial talents are multiplied, at least, with the number of its rulers; and a Julian,¹ or Semiramis,² may reign in the North, while Arcadius and Honorius again slumber on the thrones of the South. The abuses of tyranny are restrained by the mutual influence of fear and shame; republics have acquired order and stability; monarchies have imbibed the principles of freedom, or, at least, of moderation; and some sense of honour and justice is introduced into the most defective constitutions by the general manners of the times. In peace, the progress of knowledge and industry is accelerated by the emulation of so many active rivals: in war, the European forces are exercised by temperate and undecisive contests. If a savage conqueror should issue from the deserts of Tartary, he must repeatedly vanquish the robust peasants of Russia, the numerous armies of Germany, the gallant nobles of France, and the intrepid freemen of Britain; who, perhaps, might confederate for their common defence. Should the victorious barbarians carry slavery and desolation as far as the Atlantic Ocean, ten thousand vessels would transport beyond their pursuit the remains of civilised society; and Europe would revive and flourish in the American world, which is already filled with her colonies and institutions.¹

III. Cold, poverty, and a life of danger and fatigue fortify the strength and courage of barbarians. In every age they have oppressed the polite and peaceful nations of China, India, and Persia, who neglected, and still neglect, to counterbalance these natural powers by the resources of military art. The warlike states of antiquity, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome, educated a race of soldiers; exercised their bodies, disciplined their courage, multiplied their forces by regular evolutions, and conver-

¹ America now contains about six millions of European blood and descent; and their numbers, at least in the North, are continually increasing. Whatever may be the changes of their political situation, they must preserve the manners of Europe; and we may reflect with some pleasure that the English language will probably be diffused over an immense and populous continent. [Gibbon]

Julian Emperor 361-3; administered Gaul from Paris
Semiramis mythical Assyrian queen; 'S. of

North' was Catherine, Empress of Russia 1762-96

215 ted the iron which they possessed into strong and serviceable weapons. But this superiority insensibly declined with their laws and manners: and the feeble policy of Constantine and his successors armed and instructed, for the ruin of the empire, the rude valour of the barbarian mercenaries. The military art has been changed by the invention of gunpowder; which enables man to command the two most powerful agents of nature, air and fire. Mathematics, chemistry, mechanics, architecture, have been applied to the service of war; and the adverse parties oppose to each other the most elaborate modes of attack and of defence. Historians may indignantly observe that the preparations of a siege would found and maintain a flourishing colony; yet we cannot be displeased that the subversion of a city should be a work of cost and difficulty; or that an industrious people should be protected by those arts which survive and supply the decay of military virtue. Cannon and fortifications now form an impregnable barrier against the Tartar horse; and Europe is secure from any future irruption of barbarians; since, before they can conquer, they must cease to be barbarous. Their gradual advances in the science of war would always be accompanied, as we may learn from the example of Russia, with a proportionable improvement in the arts of peace and civil policy; and they themselves must deserve a place among the polished nations whom they subdue.

235 Should these speculations be found doubtful or fallacious, there still remains a more humble source of comfort and hope. The discoveries of ancient and modern navigators, and the domestic history or tradition of the most enlightened nations, represent the *human savage* naked both in mind and body, and destitute of laws, of arts, of ideas, and almost of language. From this abject condition, perhaps the primitive and universal state of man, he has gradually arisen to command the animals, to fertilise the earth, to traverse the ocean, and to measure the heavens. His progress in the improvement and exercise of his mental and corporeal faculties has been irregular and various; infinitely slow in the beginning, and increasing by degrees with redoubled velocity: ages of laborious ascent have been followed by a moment of rapid downfall; and the several climates of the globe have felt the vicissitudes of light and darkness. Yet the experience of four thousand years should enlarge our hopes and diminish our apprehensions: we cannot determine to what height the human species may aspire in their advances towards perfection; but it may safely be presumed that no people, unless the face of nature is changed, will relapse into their original barbarism. The improvements of society may be viewed under a threefold aspect. 1. The poet or philosopher illustrates his age and country by the efforts of a *single* mind; but these superior powers of reason or fancy are rare and spontaneous productions; and the genius of Homer, or Cicero, or Newton, would excite less admiration if they could be created by the

260 will of a prince or the lessons of a preceptor. 2. The benefits of law and policy, of trade and manufactures, of arts and sciences, are more solid and permanent; and *many* individuals may be qualified, by education and discipline, to promote, in their respective stations, the interest of the community. But this general order is the effect of skill and labour; and the complex machinery may be decayed by time, or injured by violence. 3. Fortunately for mankind, the more useful, or, at least, more necessary arts, can be performed without superior talents or national subordination; without the powers of *one*, or the union of *many*. Each village, each family, each individual, must always possess both ability and inclination to perpetuate the use of fire and of metals; the propagation and service of domestic animals; the methods of hunting and fishing; the rudiments of navigation; the imperfect cultivation of corn or other nutritive grain; and the simple practice of the mechanic trades. Private genius and public industry may be extirpated; but these hardy plants survive the tempest and strike an everlasting root into the most unfavourable soil. The splendid days of Augustus[†] and Trajan[†] were eclipsed by a cloud of ignorance; and the barbarians subverted the laws and palaces of Rome. But the scythe, the invention or emblem of Saturn, still continued annually to mow the harvests of Italy; and the human feasts of the Læstrigions[†] have never been renewed on the coast of Campania.

280 Since the first discovery of the arts, war, commerce, and religious zeal have diffused among the savages of the Old and New World these inestimable gifts: they have been successively propagated; they can never be lost. We may therefore acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased and still increases the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race.

1781

Augustus 63 BC-AD 14; first Emperor
Trajan Emperor 98-117; soldier

Læstrigions man-eating giants

James Boswell

1740–95

Boswell was the eldest son of the Scottish judge, Lord Auchinleck, a Whig and stern Presbyterian, who opposed his romantic military ambitions and made him follow the family legal tradition. In a period of high life and debauchery in London, Boswell met Samuel Johnson (1763), then left for his Grand Tour on the Continent, during which his pursuit of famous men netted Voltaire and Rousseau. Through Rousseau, he visited Corsica, and attempted to stampede Britain to the cause of its independence: his *Account of Corsica* (1768) won a European reputation. In Scotland, he practised as an advocate, but never attained high office there or in the political career he sought in England. He regularly visited London for its social and intellectual pleasures, and was elected to The Club. His professional career, his drinking, whoring and melancholy, as well as his encounters with Johnson, were recorded for thirty years in journals of great frankness, vividness and dramatic skill in recording conversations. They have only been published in this century; but in them he had found the materials and the method for his two great books, which are innovations in the art of biography: his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785) recorded the clash in 1773 between Johnson and Scotland; his *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), a huge work of unprecedented detail, seemed to many a violation of decency and privacy. A worldly failure, Boswell has often been dismissed as a buffoon; but his journals, fascinating human records in themselves, show his ability to select, dramatise and analyse experience.

From LONDON JOURNAL 1762–1763†

['A Man of Pleasure']

WEDNESDAY 12 JANUARY 1763. Louisa and I agreed that at eight at night she would meet me in the Piazzas of Covent Garden. I was quite elevated, and felt myself able and undaunted to engage in the wars of the Paphian[†] Queen.

I dined at Sheridan's[†] very heartily. He showed to my conviction that Garrick[†] did not play the great scene in the Second Part of *King Henry* with propriety. 'People,' said he, 'in this age know when particular lines or even speeches are well spoke; but they do not study character, which is a matter of the utmost moment, as people of different characters feel and express their feelings very differently. For want of a knowledge of this, Mr Barry acted the distress of Othello, the Moorish warrior whose stubborn soul was hard to bend, and that of Castalio,[†] the gentle lover who was all tenderness, in the self-same way. Now Mr Garrick in that famous scene whines most piteously when he ought to upbraid. Shakespeare has discovered there a most intimate knowledge of human nature. He shows you the King worn out with sickness and so weak that he faints. He had usurped the crown by the force of arms and was convinced that it must be held with spirit. He saw his son given up to low debauchery. He was anxious and vexed to think of the anarchy that would ensue at his death. Upon discovering that the Prince had taken the crown from his pillow, and concluding him desirous of his death, he is fired with rage. He starts up. He cries, "Go chide him hither!" His anger animates him so much that he throws aside his distemper. Nature furnishes all her strength for one last effort. He is for a moment renewed. He is for a moment the spirited Henry the Fourth. He upbraids him with bitter sarcasm and bold figures. And then what a beautiful variety is there, when, upon young Harry's contrition, he falls on his neck and melts into parental tenderness.'

I yielded this point to Sheridan candidly. But upon his attacking Garrick as a tragedian in his usual way, I opposed him keenly, and declared he was prejudiced; because the world thought him a good tragic actor. 'So do I, Sir,' said he; 'I think him the best I ever saw.' BOSWELL. 'Except yourself, Mr Sheridan. But come, we shall take this for granted. The world then think him near equal or as good as you in what you excel in.' SHERIDAN. 'Sir, I am not a bit prejudiced. I don't

London Journal For some weeks, Boswell has been courting an actress at Covent Garden Theatre: his theatrical interests run through the passage
Paphian Venus, goddess of love
Sheridan actor, father of the dramatist
Garrick 1717–79: greatest actor of age
Castalio in *The Orphan* (1680) by Thos. Otway

value acting. I shall suppose that I was the greatest actor that ever lived and universally acknowledged so, I would not choose that it should be remembered. I would have it erased out of the anecdotes of my life. Acting is a poor thing in the present state of the stage. For my own part, I engaged in it merely as a step to something greater, a just notion of eloquence.' This was in a good measure true. But he certainly talked too extravagantly.

An old Irish maid, or rather an Irish old maid (O most hideous character!) dined with us. She was indeed a terrible Joy.[†] She was a woman of knowledge and criticism and correct taste. But there came to tea a Miss Mowat who played once on the stage here for a winter or two, a lovely girl. Many an amorous glance did I exchange with her. I was this day quite flashy with love. We often addressed our discourse to each other. I hope to see her again; and yet what have I to do with anybody but dear Louisa?

At the appointed hour of eight I went to the Piazzas, where I sauntered up and down for a while in a sort of trembling suspense, I knew not why. At last my charming companion appeared, and I immediately conducted her to a hackney-coach which I had ready waiting, pulling up the blinds, and away we drove to the destined scene of delight. We contrived to seem as if we had come off a journey, and carried in a bundle our night-clothes, handkerchiefs, and other little things. We also had with us some almond biscuits, or as they call them in London, macaroons, which looked like provision on the road. On our arrival at Hayward's[†] we were shown into the parlour, in the same manner that any decent couple would be. I here thought proper to conceal my own name (which the people of the house had never heard), and assumed the name of Mr Digges.[†] We were shown up to the very room where he slept. I said my cousin, as I called him, was very well. That Ceres and Bacchus[†] might in moderation lend their assistance to Venus, I ordered a genteel supper and some wine.

Louisa told me she had two aunts who carried her over to France when she was a girl, and that she could once speak French as fluently as English. We talked a little in it, and agreed that we would improve ourselves by reading and speaking it every day. I asked her if we did not just look like man and wife. 'No,' said she, 'we are too fond for married people.' No wonder that she may have a bad idea of that union, considering how bad it was for her. She has contrived a pretty device for a seal. A heart is gently warmed by Cupid's flame, and Hymen[†] comes with his rude torch and extinguishes it. She said she

Joy that is, very Irish
Hayward innkeeper (who thinks B. married)
Digges actor friend

Ceres . . . Bacchus deities of agriculture and wine
Hymen god of marriage

found herself quite in a flutter. 'Why, really,' said I, 'reason sometimes has no power. We have no occasion to be frightened, and yet we are both a little so. Indeed, I preserve a tolerable presence of mind.' I rose and kissed her, and conscious that I had no occasion to doubt my qualifications as a gallant, I joked about it: 'How curious would it be if I should be so frightened that we should rise as we lay down.' She reproved my wanton language by a look of modesty. The bells of St Bride's church rung their merry chimes hard by. I said that the bells in Cupid's court would be this night set a-ringing for joy at our union.

We supped cheerfully and agreeably and drank a few glasses, and then the maid came and put the sheets, well aired, upon the bed. I now contemplated my fair prize. Louisa is just twenty-four, of a tall rather than short figure, finely made in person, with a handsome face and an enchanting languish in her eyes. She dresses with taste. She has sense, good humour, and vivacity, and looks quite a woman in genteel life. As I mused on this elevating subject, I could not help being somehow pleasingly confounded to think that so fine a woman was at this moment in my possession, that without any motives of interest[†] she had come with me to an inn, agreed to be my intimate companion, as to be my bedfellow all night, and to permit me the full enjoyment of her person.

When the servant left the room, I embraced her warmly and begged that she would not now delay my felicity. She declined to undress before me, and begged I would retire and send her one of the maids. I did so, gravely desiring the girl to go up to Mrs Digges. I then took a candle in my hand and walked out to the yard. The night was very dark and very cold. I experienced for some minutes the rigours of the season, and called into my mind many terrible ideas of hardships, that I might make a transition from such dreary thoughts to the most gay and delicious feelings. I then caused make a bowl of negus,[†] very rich of the fruit, which I caused be set in the room as a reviving cordial.

I came softly into the room, and in a sweet delirium slipped into bed and was immediately clasped in her snowy arms and pressed to her milk-white bosom. Good heavens, what a loose did we give to amorous dalliance! The friendly curtain of darkness concealed our blushes. In a moment I felt myself animated with the strongest powers of love, and from my dearest creature's kindness, had a most luscious feast. Proud of my godlike vigour, I soon resumed the noble game. I was in full glow of health. Sobriety had preserved me from effeminacy and weakness, and my bounding blood beat quick and high alarms. A more voluptuous night I never enjoyed. Five times was I fairly lost in supreme rapture. Louisa was madly fond of me; she declared I was a prodigy, and asked me if this was not extraordinary for human nature. I said

Interest worldly advantage

negus spiced alcohol

twice as much might be, but this was not, although in my own mind I was somewhat proud of my performance. She said it was what there was no just reason to be proud of. But I told her I could not help it. She said it was what we had in common with the beasts. I said no. For we had it highly improved by the pleasures of sentiment. I asked her what she thought enough. She gently chid me for asking such questions, but said two times. I mentioned the Sunday's assignation, when I was in such bad spirits, told her in what agony of mind I was, and asked her if she would not have despised me for my imbecility. She declared she would not, as it was what people had not in their own power.

She often insisted that we should compose ourselves to sleep before I found consent to it. At last I sunk to rest in her arms and she in mine. I found the negus, which had a fine flavour, very refreshing to me. Louisa had an exquisite mixture of delicacy and wantonness that made me enjoy her with more relish. Indeed I could not help roving in fancy to the embraces of some other ladies which my lively imagination strongly pictured. I don't know if that was altogether fair. However, Louisa had all the advantage. She said she was quite fatigued and could neither stir leg nor arm. She begged I would not despise her, and hoped my love would not be altogether transient. I have painted this night as well as I could. The description is faint; but I surely may be styled a Man of Pleasure.

THURSDAY 13 JANUARY. We awaked from sweet repose after the luscious fatigues of the night. I got up between nine and ten and walked out till Louisa should rise. I patrolled up and down Fleet Street, thinking on London, the seat of Parliament and the seat of pleasure, and seeming to myself as one of the wits in King Charles the Second's time. I then came in and we had an agreeable breakfast, after which we left Hayward's, who said he was sorry he had not more of our company, and calling a hackney-coach, drove to Soho[†] Square, where Louisa had some visits to pay. So we parted. Thus was this conquest completed to my highest satisfaction. I can with pleasure trace the progress of this intrigue to its completion. I am now at ease on that head, having my fair one fixed as my own. As Captain Plume[†] says, the best security for a woman's mind is her body. I really conducted this affair[†] with a manliness and prudence that pleased me very much. The whole expense was just eighteen shillings.

I called at Louisa's and seemed to be surprised that she was abroad. I then went and called at Drury Lane Playhouse for Mr Garrick. I had called for him at his house, but had never found him. He met me with

Soho in West End
Captain Plume in Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1706)
affair within days, he bitterly finds he has contracted a venereal disease

great civility and even kindness; told me that he had bowed to me in the House of Lords when I had not observed him; said he would be glad to contribute to my happiness, and asked me if I was come to stay. I told him that I hoped to get into the Guards. 'To be sure,' said he, 'it is a most genteel thing, and I think, Sir, you ought to be a soldier. The law requires a sad deal of plodding. But,' said he, 'has your father got over the pangs of your forsaking his scheme?' I told him he was pretty well reconciled. I told him I wanted much to pass some time with him. He said he always breakfasted at nine and would be glad to see me whenever I chose to come and let Mrs Garrick make tea for me. He then carried me to see the paintings of Mr Zoffany in the Piazzas, where Mr Garrick is shown in several different ways. 'Take care, Zoffany,' said he, 'you have made one of these heads for me *longer* than the other, and I would not willingly have it shortened.' In the theatre there was a fine large dog chained. 'This,' said he, 'is Johnston's (the box-keeper's) bear, though I don't know which of 'em is the greatest bear.'

I dined nowhere, but drank tea at Love's, and at night went to Covent Garden gallery and saw *The Jovial Crew*.[†] My frame still thrilled with pleasure, and my want of so much rest last night gave me an agreeable languor. The songs revived in my mind many gay ideas, and recalled in the most lively colours to my imagination the time when I was first in London, when all was new to me, when I felt the warm glow of youthful feeling and was full of curiosity and wonder. I then had at times a degree of ecstasy of feeling that the experience which I have since had has in some measure cooled and abated. But then my ignorance at that time is infinitely excelled by the knowledge and moderation and government of myself which I have now acquired. After the play I came home, eat a Bath cake and a sweet orange, and went comfortably to bed.

1763

1950

From THE LIFE OF JOHNSON [May 1776: A Potential Explosion]

I am now to record a very curious incident in Dr Johnson's Life, which fell under my own observation; of which *pars magna fui* [I was a great part], and which I am persuaded will, with the liberal-minded, be much to his credit.

Jovial Crew operatic version of 1652 play by Rich. Brome

5 My desire of being acquainted with celebrated men of every description, had made me, much about the same time, obtain an introduction to Dr Samuel Johnson and to John Wilkes,[†] Esq. Two men more different could perhaps not be selected out of all mankind. They had even attacked one another with some asperity in their writings; yet I lived in habits of friendship with both. I could fully relish the excellence of each; for I have ever delighted in that intellectual chemistry, which can separate good qualities from evil in the same person. . . .

10 My worthy booksellers and friends, Messieurs Dilly in the Poultry, at whose hospitable and well-covered table I have seen a greater number of literary men, than at any other, except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, 15 had invited me to meet Mr Wilkes and some more gentlemen on Wednesday, May 15. 'Pray (said I) let us have Dr Johnson.' — 'What, with Mr Wilkes? not for the world (said Mr Edward Dilly): Dr Johnson would never forgive me.' — 'Come (said I), if you'll let me negotiate for you, I will be answerable that all shall go well.' DILLY. 'Nay, if you 20 will take it upon you, I am sure I shall be very happy to see them both here.'

Notwithstanding the high veneration which I entertained for Dr Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I should gain my point. I was persuaded that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, 'Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?' he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, 'Dine with Jack Wilkes, Sir! I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch.'[†] I therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house in an evening, took occasion to open my plan thus: — 'Mr Dilly, Sir, sends his respectful compliments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honour to dine with him on Wednesday next along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I am obliged to Mr Dilly. I will wait upon him —' BOSWELL. 'Provided, Sir, I suppose, that the company which he is to have, is agreeable to you.' JOHNSON. 'What do you mean, Sir? What do you take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world, as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?' BOSWELL. 'I beg your pardon, Sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. Perhaps he may have some of what he calls his patriotic[†] friends with him.' JOHNSON. 'Well, Sir, and what then? What care I for his patriotic friends? Poh!' BOSWELL. 'I should not be surprised to find Jack Wilkes there.' JOHNSON. 'And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is

Wilkes 1727–97: rake, wit, and anti-government MP
Jack Ketch the hangman
patriotic 'factious disturber of the government' (Johnson)

45 that to *me*, Sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but really it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally.' BOSWELL. 'Pray forgive me, Sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me.' Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed.

50 Upon the much-expected Wednesday, I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffeting his books, as upon a former occasion, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad. 'How is this, Sir? (said I). Don't you recollect that you are to dine at Mr Dilly's?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly's: it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs Williams.' BOSWELL. 'But, my dear Sir, you know you were engaged to Mr Dilly, and I told him so. He will expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come.' JOHNSON. 'You must talk to Mrs Williams about this.'

Here was a sad dilemma. I feared that what I was so confident I had secured would yet be frustrated. He had accustomed himself to shew Mrs Williams such a degree of humane attention, as frequently imposed some restraint upon him; and I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir. I hastened downstairs to the blind lady's room, and told her I was in great uneasiness, for Dr Johnson had engaged to me to dine this day at Mr Dilly's, but that he had told me he had forgotten his engagement, and had ordered dinner at home. 'Yes, Sir (said she, pretty peevishly), Dr Johnson is to dine at home.' — 'Madam (said I), his respect for you is such, that I know he will not leave you unless you absolutely desire it. But as you have so much of his company, I hope you will be good enough to forego it for a day; as Mr Dilly is a very worthy man, has frequently had agreeable parties at his house for Dr Johnson, and will be vexed if the Doctor neglects him today. And then, Madam, be pleased to consider my situation; I carried the message, and I assured Mr Dilly that Dr Johnson was to come, and no doubt he has made a dinner, and invited a company, and boasted of the honour he expected to have. I shall be quite disgraced if the Doctor is not there.' She gradually softened to my solicitations, which were certainly as earnest as most entreaties to ladies upon any occasion, and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr Johnson, 'That all things considered, she thought he should certainly go.' I flew back to him, still in dust, and careless of what should be the event, 'indifferent in his choice to go or stay;' but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs Williams's consent, he roared, 'Frank, a clean shirt,' and was very soon dressed. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney-coach with me, I

exulted as much as a fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him to set out for Gretna Green.[†]

When we entered Mr Dilly's drawing room, he found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. I observed him whispering to Mr Dilly, 'Who is that gentleman, Sir?' – 'Mr. Arthur Lee.' – JOHNSON. 'Too, too, too,' (under his breath) which was one of his habitual mutterings. Mr Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a *patriot* but an *American*.[†] He was afterwards minister from the United States at the court of Madrid. 'And who is the gentleman in lace?' – 'Mr Wilkes, Sir.' This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself, and taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat and read, or at least kept his eye upon it intently for some time, till he composed himself. His feelings, I dare say, were awkward enough. But he no doubt recollected his having rated me for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company, and he, therefore, resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of those whom he might chance to meet.

The cheering sound of 'Dinner is upon the table,' dissolved his reverie, and we *all* sat down without any symptom of ill humour. There were present, besides Mr Wilkes, and Mr Arthur Lee, who was an old companion of mine when he studied physick at Edinburgh, Mr (now Sir John) Miller, Dr Lettsom, and Mr Slater the druggist. Mr Wilkes placed himself next to Dr Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness, that he gained upon him insensibly. No man eat more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Mr Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. 'Pray give me leave, Sir: – It is better here – A little of the brown – Some fat, Sir – A little of the stuffing – Some gravy – Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter – Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; – or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest.' – 'Sir, I am obliged to you, Sir,' cried Johnson, bowing, and turning his head to him with a look for some time of 'surlly virtue',[†] but, in a short while, of complacency.

Footes[†] being mentioned, Johnson said, 'He is not a good mimic.' One of the company added, 'A merry Andrew, a buffoon.' JOHNSON. 'But he has wit too, and is not deficient in ideas, or in fertility and variety of imagery, and not empty of reading; he has knowledge enough to fill up his part. One species of wit he has in an eminent degree, that of escape.

Gretna Green in Scotland, where marriage-laws were laxer
American Johnson had written against the colonists' political case
'surlly virtue' Johnson's poem *London*, l.145
Footes Samuel Footes (1720–77), actor-dramatist

You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, Sir, when you think you have got him – like an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has a great range for his wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse. Garrick is under many restraints from which Footes is free.' WILKES. 'Garrick's wit is more like Lord Chesterfield's.' JOHNSON. 'The first time I was in company with Footes was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him. But the dog was so very comical, that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. No, Sir, he was irresistible. He upon one occasion experienced, in an extraordinary degree, the efficacy of his powers of entertaining. Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small-beer brewer, and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring customers amongst his numerous acquaintance. Fitzherbert was one who took his small-beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being afraid of offending their master, who they knew liked Footes much as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy, who was rather a favourite, to be their deputy, and deliver their remonstrance; and having invested him with the whole authority of the kitchen, he was to inform Mr Fitzherbert, in all their names, upon a certain day, that they would drink Footes's small-beer no longer. On that day Footes happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted with Footes's stories, and merriment, and grimace, that when he went down stairs, he told them, "This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message. I will drink his small-beer."'

Somebody observed that Garrick could not have done this. WILKES. 'Garrick would have made the small-beer still smaller. He is now leaving the stage; but he will play *Scrub*[†] all his life.' I knew that Johnson would let nobody attack Garrick[†] but himself, as Garrick once said to me, and I had heard him praise his liberality; so to bring out his commendation of his celebrated pupil, I said, loudly, 'I have heard Garrick is liberal.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man in England that I am acquainted with, and that not from ostentatious views. Garrick was very poor when he began life; so when he came to have money, he probably was very unskilful in giving away, and saved when he should not. But Garrick began to be liberal as soon as he could; and I am of opinion, the

Scrub servant in Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707)
Garrick formerly Johnson's pupil

170 reputation of avarice which he has had, has been very lucky for him, and prevented his having many enemies. You despise a man for avarice, but do not hate him. Garrick might have been much better attacked for living with more splendour than is suitable to a player: if they had had the wit to have assaulted him in that quarter, they might have galled him more. But they have kept clamouring about his avarice, which has rescued him from much obloquy and envy.

175 Talking of the great difficulty of obtaining authentic information for biography, Johnson told us, 'When I was a young fellow I wanted to write the *Life of Dryden*, and in order to get materials, I applied to the only two persons then alive who had seen him; these were old Swinney, and old Cibber. Swinney's information was no more than this, "That at Will's coffee-house Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter, and was then called his winter-chair; and that it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and was then called his summer-chair." Cibber could tell no more but "That he remembered him a decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's." You are to consider that Cibber was then at a great distance from Dryden, had perhaps one leg only in the room, and durst not draw in the other.' BOSWELL. 'Yet Cibber was a man of observation?' JOHNSON. 'I think not.' BOSWELL. 'You will allow his *Apology*¹ to be well done.'

190 JOHNSON. 'Very well done, to be sure, Sir. That book is a striking proof of the justice of Pope's remark:

195 "Each might his several province well command,
Would all but stoop to what they understand."

BOSWELL. 'And his plays are good.' JOHNSON. 'Yes; but that was his trade; *l'esprit du corps*: he had been all his life among players and playwrights. I wondered that he had so little to say in conversation, for he had kept the best company, and learnt all that can be got by the ear. He abused Pindar to me, and then shewed me an Ode of his own, with an absurd couplet, making a linnet soar on an eagle's wing. I told him that when the ancients made a simile, they always made it like something real.'

200 Mr Wilkes remarked, that 'among all the bold flights of Shakespeare's imagination, the boldest was making Birnamwood march to Dunsinane; creating a wood where there never was a shrub; a wood in Scotland: ha! ha! ha!' And he also observed, that 'the clannish slavery of the Highlands of Scotland was the single exception to Milton's remark of "The Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty," being worshipped in all hilly countries.' — 'When I was at Inverary (said he) on a visit to my old friend, Archibald, Duke of Argyle, his dependents congratulated me on

Apology see p. 166

215 being such a favourite of his Grace. I said, "It is then, gentlemen, truly lucky for me; for if I had displeased the Duke, and he had wished it, there is not a Campbell among you but would have been ready to bring John Wilkes's head to him in a charger. It would have been only

"Off with his head! So much for Aylesbury."

I was then member for Aylesbury.

220 Dr Johnson and Mr Wilkes talked of the contested passage in Horace's *Art of Poetry*, '*Difficile est propriè communia dicere*.' Mr Wilkes, according to my note, gave the interpretation thus; 'It is difficult to speak with propriety of common things; as, if a poet had to speak of Queen Caroline drinking tea, he must endeavour to avoid the vulgarity of cups and saucers.' . . .

225 WILKES. 'We have no City-Poet now: that is an office which has gone into disuse. The last was Elkanah Settle.¹ There is something in *names* which one cannot help feeling. Now *Elkanah Settle* sounds so queer, who can expect much from that name? We should have no hesitation to give it for John Dryden, in preference to Elkanah Settle, from the names only, without knowing their different merits.' JOHNSON. 'I suppose, Sir, Settle did as well for Aldermen in his time, as John Home¹ could do now. Where did Beckford¹ and Trecothick learn English?'

Mr Arthur Lee mentioned some Scotch who had taken possession of a barren part of America, and wondered why they should choose it.

235 JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, all barrenness is comparative. The *Scotch* would not know it to be barren.' BOSWELL. 'Come, come, he is flattering the English. You have now been in Scotland, Sir, and say if you did not see meat and drink enough there.' JOHNSON. 'Why yes, Sir; meat and drink enough to give the inhabitants sufficient strength to run away from home.' All these quick and lively sallies were said sportively, quite in jest, and with a smile, which showed that he meant only wit. Upon this

240 topic he and Mr Wilkes could perfectly assimilate; here was a bond of union between them, and I was conscious that as both of them had visited Caledonia, both were fully satisfied of the strange narrow ignorance of those who imagine that it is a land of famine. But they amused themselves with persevering in the old jokes. When I claimed a superiority for Scotland over England in one respect, that no man can be arrested there for a debt merely because another swears it against him; but there must first be the judgement of a court of law ascertaining its justice; and that a seizure of the person, before judgement is obtained, can take place only, if his creditor should swear that he is about to fly

Off . . . Aylesbury alters a line from Cibber's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard III*
Elkanah Settle 1648–1724; antagonist of Dryden

John Home 1722–1808: Scottish dramatist (Douglas, 1756)
Beckford 1709–70: Lord Mayor of London, father of the writer

from the country, or, as it is technically expressed, is *in meditation* *fugæ*. WILKES. 'That, I should think, may be safely sworn of all the Scotch nation.' JOHNSON. (to Mr Wilkes) 'You must know, Sir, I lately took my friend Boswell and shewed him genuine civilised life in an English provincial town. I turned him loose at Lichfield, my native city, that he might see for once real civility: for you know he lives among savages in Scotland, and among rakes in London.' WILKES. 'Except when he is with grave, sober, decent people like you and me.' JOHNSON. (smiling) 'And we ashamed of him.'

They were quite frank and easy. Johnson told the story of his asking Mrs Macaulay[†] to allow her footman to sit down with them, to prove the ridiculousness of the argument for the equality of mankind; and he said to me afterwards, with a nod of satisfaction, 'You saw Mr Wilkes acquiesced.' Wilkes talked with all imaginable freedom of the ludicrous title given to the Attorney-General,[†] *Diabolus Regis* [King's Devil]; adding, 'I have reason to know something about that officer; for I was prosecuted for a libel.' Johnson, who many people would have supposed must have been furiously angry at hearing this talked of so lightly, said not a word. He was now, *indeed*, 'a good-humoured fellow.'

After dinner we had an accession of Mrs Knowles, the Quaker lady, well known for her various talents, and of Mr Alderman Lee. Amidst some patriotic groans, somebody (I think the Alderman) said, 'Poor old England is lost.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is not so much to be lamented that Old England is lost, as that the Scotch have found it.' WILKES. 'Had Lord Bute[†] governed Scotland only, I should not have taken the trouble to write his eulogy, and dedicate *Mortimer*[†] to him.'

Mr Wilkes held a candle to shew a fine print of a beautiful female figure which hung in the room, and pointed out the elegant contour of the bosom with the finger of an arch connoisseur. He afterwards, in a conversation with me, waggishly insisted, that all the time Johnson shewed visible signs of a fervent admiration of the corresponding charms of the fair Quaker.

This record, though by no means so perfect as I could wish, will serve to give a notion of a very curious interview, which was not only pleasing at the time, but had the agreeable and benignant effect of reconciling any animosity, and sweetening any acidity, which in the various bustle of political contest, had been produced in the minds of two men, who though widely different, had so many things in common – classical learning, modern literature, wit, and humour, and ready repartee – that

Mrs Macaulay 1731–91: republican historian
 Attorney-General government law-officer
 Lord Bute 1713–92; Prime Minister of Scots
 family; procured Johnson's pension
 Mortimer history play with dedication by
 Wilkes (1763) ironically criticising the
 influence of Bute

290 it would have been much to be regretted if they had been for ever at a distance from each other.

Mr Burke gave me much credit for this successful *negotiation*; and pleasantly said, that 'there was nothing to equal it in the whole history of the *Corps Diplomatique*.'

295 I attended Dr Johnson home, and had the satisfaction to hear him tell Mrs Williams how much he had been pleased with Mr Wilkes's company, and what an agreeable day he had passed. . . .

1791

Henry Mackenzie

1745–1831

Mackenzie, a Scottish lawyer, was a more robust character than one might deduce from his most successful novel, *The Man of Feeling*, a loosely-structured example of the novel of sensibility, in which Harley, the high-souled hero, cultivates and displays all too publicly deep sympathy for his fellow-man. (The masterpiece of the genre is Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, where the emotion is tempered by self-knowledge and sexual innuendo.)

From THE MAN OF FEELING

[*Harley visits a Madhouse*]

Separate from the rest stood one, whose appearance had something of superior dignity. Her face, though pale and wasted, was less squalid than those of the others, and showed a dejection of that decent kind, which moves our pity unmixed with horror: upon her, therefore, the eyes of all were immediately turned. The keeper, who accompanied them, observed it: 'This,' said he, 'is a young lady, who was born to ride in her coach and six. She was beloved, if the story I have heard is true, by a young gentleman, her equal in birth, though by no means her match in fortune: but love, they say, is blind, and so she fancied him as much as he did her. Her father, it seems, would not hear of their marriage, and threatened to turn her out of doors, if ever she saw him again. Upon this the young gentleman took a voyage to the West Indies, in hopes of bettering his fortune, and obtaining his mistress; but he was scarce landed, when he was seized with one of the fevers which are common in those islands, and died in a few days, lamented by every one that knew him. This news soon reached his mistress, who was at the same time pressed by her father to marry a rich miserly fellow, who was old enough to be her grandfather. The death of her lover had no effect on her inhuman parent; he was only the more earnest for her marriage with the man he had provided for her; and what between her despair at the death of the one, and her aversion to the other, the poor young lady was reduced to the condition you see her in. But God would

not prosper such cruelty; her father's affairs soon after went to wreck, and he died almost a beggar.'

25 Though this story was told in very plain language, it had particularly attracted Harley's notice: he had given it the tribute of some tears. The unfortunate young lady had till now seemed entranced in thought, with her eyes fixed on a little garnet-ring she wore on her finger: she turned them now upon Harley. 'My Billy is no more!' said she, 'do you weep for my Billy? Blessings on your tears! I would weep too, but my brain is dry; and it burns, it burns!' — She drew nearer to Harley. — 'Be comforted, young Lady,' said he, 'your Billy is in heaven.' 'Is he, indeed? and shall we meet again? And shall that frightful man' (pointing to the keeper) 'not be there? — Alas! I am grown naughty of late; I have almost forgotten to think of heaven: yet I pray sometimes; when I can, I pray; and sometimes I sing; when I am saddest, I sing: — You shall hear me, hush!

'Light be the earth on Billy's breast,
And green the sod that wraps his grave!'

40 There was a plaintive wildness in the air not to be withstood; and, except the keeper's, there was not an unmoistened eye around her.

'Do you weep again?' said she; 'I would not have you weep: you are like my Billy; you are, believe me; just so he looked when he gave me this ring; poor Billy! 'twas the last time ever we met! —

45 'Twas when the seas were roaring — I love you for resembling my Billy; but I shall never love any man like him.' — She stretched out her hand to Harley; he pressed it between both of his, and bathed it with his tears. — 'Nay, that is Billy's ring,' said she, 'you cannot have it, indeed; but here is another, look here, which I plaited today of some gold-thread from this bit of stuff; will you keep it for my sake? I am a strange girl; — but my heart is harmless: my poor heart! it will burst some day; feel how it beats.' — She pressed his hand to her bosom, then holding her head in the attitude of listening — 'Hark! one, two, three! be quiet, thou little trembler; my Billy's is cold! — but I had forgotten the ring.' She put it on his finger. — 'Farewell! I must leave you now.' —

55 She would have withdrawn her hand; Harley held it to his lips. — 'I dare not stay longer; my head throbs sadly: farewell!' — She walked with a hurried step to a little apartment at some distance. Harley stood fixed in astonishment and pity! his friend gave money to the keeper. — Harley looked on his ring. — He put a couple of guineas into the man's hand: 'Be kind to that unfortunate' — He burst into tears, and left them.

1771

Robert Fergusson

1750–74

In a short career which ended in madness, Fergusson wrote poems in English and Scots, and greatly influenced Burns. A fine comic writer, he ridiculed Johnson's visit to St Andrews (where he had studied), and in 'The Sow of Feeling' undercut Henry Mackenzie's sentimentalism. His poems appeared in 1773. His best work shows a critical relish of the Scottish scene.

THE DAFT-DAYS[†]

Now mirk* December's dowie* face
Glours our* the rigs[†] wi' sour grimace,
While, thro' his *minimum* of space,
The bleer-ey'd sun,
5 Wi' blinkin light and stealing pace,
His race doth run.

From naked groves nae birdie sings;
To shepherd's pipe nae hillock rings;
The breeze nae od'rous flavour brings
From Borean[†] cave;
10 And dwynin* Nature droops her wings,
Wi' visage grave.

Mankind but scanty pleasure glean
Frae snawy hill or barren plain,
15 Whan Winter, 'midst his nipping train,
Wi' frozen spear,
Sends drift[†] ower a' his bleak domain,
And guides the weir.*

dark gloomy
glowers over

declining

war

The Daft Days Time of revelry at New Year Borean of north wind
rigs field ridges drift of snow

20 Auld Reikie![†] thou'rt the canny* hole,
A bield* for money caldrife* soul,
Wha snugly at thine ingle* loll,

Baith warm and couth;*
While round they gar* the bicker* roll
To weet their mouth.

25 When merry Yule-day comes, I trow,
You'll scantlins* find a hungry mou;
Sma' are our cares, our stamacks fou

And kickshaws,* strangers to our view,
O' gusty* gear,
30 Sin fairn-year.*

Ye browster* wives, now busk* ye bra,
And fling your sorrows far awa';
Then, come and gies the tither blaw*
Of reaming ale,
35 Mair precious than the well of Spa,
Our hearts to heal.

Then, tho' at odds wi' a' the warl',
Amang ourselfs we'll never quarrel;
Tho' Discord gie a canker'd snarl
To spoil our glee,
40 As lang's there's pith* into the barrel
We'll drink and 'gree.

Fidlers, your pins in temper fix,
And roset[†] weel your fiddlesticks,
45 But banish vile Italian tricks
From out your *quorum*,
Nor fortes wi' pianos mix,
Gie's Tulloch Gorum.[†]

For nought can cheer the heart sae weil
As can a canty Highland reel;
50 It even vivifies the heel
To skip and dance:
Lifeless is he wha canna feel
Its influence.

cheerful
spiritless
fireside
sociable
make cup

scarcely
tasty
novelties
last year

ale-seller
dress
drink

strength

Reikie smoky [Edinburgh] But banish . . . Gorum He prefers native
roset rub with rosin music to foreign elaborations

55 Let mirth abound, let social cheer
Invest the dawning of the year;
Let blithesome innocence appear

To crown our joy;
Nor envy wi' sarcastic sneer,
Our bliss destroy.

60

And thou, great god of *Aqua Vitæ*![†]
Wha sways the empire of this city,
When fou we're sometimes capernoity,*

Be thou prepar'd
To hedge us frae that black banditti,
The City-Guard.

1772

From AULD REIKIE. A POEM[†]

Auld Reikie! wale* o' ilka town
That Scotland kens beneath the moon;
Whare couthy chiels at e'enin meet
Their bizzing craigs[†] and mou's to weet:

5 And blythly gar auld Care gae bye
Wi' blinkit and wi' bleering eye:

O'er lang frae thee the Muse has been
Sae frisky on the simmer's green,
Whan flowers and gowans wont to glent*
In bonny blinks* upo' the bent;*

10 But now the leaves a yellow die,
Peel'd frae the branches, quickly fly;
And now frae nouthur bush nor brier
The spreckl'd mavis* greets your ear;

15 Nor bonny blackbird skims and roves
To seek his love in yonder groves.
To seek his love in yonder groves.

Then, Reikie, welcome! Thou canst charm
Unfleggit* by the year's alarm;

Not Boreas, that sae snelly blows,
Dare here pap in his angry nose:

20 Thanks to our dads,* whase biggin* stands ancestors/predecessors building

Aqua Vitæ whisky (Latin: water of life)
Auld Reikie traditional name for Edinburgh

bizzing craigs parched throats

A shelter to surrounding lands.*

Now morn, with bonny purpie-smiles,
Kisses the air-cock o' St Giles;[†]

25 Rakin their ein, the servant lasses
Early begin their lies and clashes;*

Ilk tells her friend of saddest distress,

That still she' brooks frae scouling mistress;
And wi' her joe* in turnpike stair

30 She'd rather snuff the stinking air,
As be subjected to her tongue,
When justly censur'd in the wrong.

On stair wi' tub, or pat in hand,
The barefoot housemaids looe to stand,

35 That antrin* fock may ken how snell*
Auld Reikie will at morning smell:
Then, with an inundation big as

The burn that 'neath the Nore Loch Brig is,
They kindly shower Edina's roses,[†]

40 To quicken and regale our noses.
Now some for this, wi' satyr's leesh,
Ha'e gi'en auld Edinburgh a creesh:*

But without souring nocht is sweet;
The morning smells that hail our street,
Prepare, and gently lead the way

45 To simmer canty, braw and gay;
Edina's sons mair eithly* share
Her spices and her dainties rare,

Than he that's never yet been call'd
Aff frae his plaidie or his fauld.

50 Now stairhead critics, senseless fools,
Censure their aim, and pride their rules,
In Luckenbooths,[†] wi' glouring eye,
Their neighbours sma'est faults descry:

55 If ony loun* should dander* there,
Of aukward gate, and foreign air,
They trace his steps, till they can tell
His pedigree as weel's himsell.

When Phoebeus blinks wi' warmer ray,
And schools at noonday get the play,
Then bus'ness, weightry bus'ness comes;

60 The trader glours; he doubts, he hums:

St Giles central church
roses domestic slops emptied into street

Luckenbooths closed stalls

tenements

chats

lover

different sharp

lash

easily

boy wander

- The lawyers eke to Cross repair,
 Their wigs to shaw, and toss an air;
 While busy agent closely plies,
 And a' his kittle* cases tries.
 Now Night, that's cuzied* chief for fun,
 Is wi' her usual rites begun;
 Thro' ilka gate the torches blaze,
 And globes send out their blinking rays.
 The usefu' cadie* plies in street,
 To bide the profits o' his feet;
 For by thir lads Auld Reikie's fock
 Ken but a sample, o' the stock
 O' thieves, that nightly wad oppress,
 And make baith goods and gear the less.
 Near him the lazy chairman* stands,
 And wats na how to turn his hands,
 Tilt some daft birky,* ranting fu',
 Has matters somewhere else to do;
 The chairman willing, gi'es his light
 To deeds o' darkness and o' night:
 It's never sax pence for a lift
 That gars thir lads wi' fu'ness rift; *
 For they wi' better gear are paid,
 And whores and culls* support their trade.
 Near some lamp-post, wi' dowy face,
 Wi' heavy een, and sour grimace,
 Stands she that beauty lang had kend,
 Whoredom her trade, and vice her end.
 But see wharenow she wuns her bread,
 By that which Nature ne'er decreed;
 And sings sad music to the lugs,*
 'Mang burachs* o' damn'd whores and rogues.
 Whane'er we reputation loss,
 Fair chastity's transparent gloss!
 Redemption seenil* kens the name
 But a's black misery and shame. . .

1773

TO THE PRINCIPAL AND PROFESSORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS, ON THEIR SUPERB TREAT TO DR SAMUEL JOHNSON[†]

- St Andrews town may look right gawsy,*
 Nae grass will grow upon her cawsey,*
 Nor wa' flowers of a yellow dye,
 Glour dowy* o'er her ruins high,
 Sin Samy's head weel pang'd* wi' lear,*
 Has seen the *Alma Mater* there:
 Regents,* my winsome billy* boys!
 'Bout him you've made an unco noise;
 Nae doubt for him your bells wad clink
 To find him upon Eden's* brink,
 An' a' things nicely set in order,
 Wad kep him on the Fifan border:
 I'se warrant now frae France an' Spain,
 Baith cooks and scullions mony ane
 Wad gar the pats an' kettles tingle
 Around the college kitchen ingle,
 To fleg* frae a' your craigs* the roup,*
 Wi' reeking het and crieshy* soup;
 And snails and puddocks* mony hunder
 Wad beeking lie the hearth-stane under,
 Wi' roast and boild, an' a' kin kind,
 To heat the body, cool the mind.
 But hear me lads! gin I'd been there,
 How I wad trimm'd the bill o' fare!
 For ne'er sic surly wight as he
 Had met wi' sic respect frae me.
 Mind ye what Sam, the lying loun!*
 Has in his Dictionar laid down?
 That aits* in England are a feast
 To cow an' horse, an' sican beast,
 While in Scots ground this growth was common
 To gust* the gab* o' man and woman.
 Tak tent,* ye Regents! then, an' hear
 My list o' gudely hamel* gear,

To the Principal and Professors of St
 Andrews Johnson visited St Andrews in
 Fife in 1773

- 35 Sic as ha'e often rax'd* the wyme*
 O' blyther fallows mony time;
 Mair hardy, souple, steive* an' swank,*
 Than ever stood on Samy's shank.
Imprimis, then, a haggis fat,
 40 Weel tortled* in a seything pat,
 Wi' spice and ingans* weel ca'd thro',
 Had help'd to gust the stirrah's* mow,*
 And plac'd itsel in truncher clean
 Before the gilpy's* glowrin een.
 45 *Secundo*, then a gude sheep's head
 Whase hide was singit, never flead,
 And four black trotters cled wi' girsle,
 Bedown his throat had learn'd to hirsle.*
 What think ye neist, o' gude fat brose†
 50 To clag* his ribs? a dainty dose!
 And white and bloody puddins routh,*
 To gar the Doctor skirl, O Drouth!*
 Whan he cou'd never houp to merit
 A cordial o' reaming claret,
 55 But thraw* his nose, and brize* and pegh*
 O'er the contents o' sma' ale quegh:*
 Then let his wisdom girm* and snarl
 O'er a weel-tostit girdle farl,*
 An' learn, that maugre o' his wame,
 60 Ill bairns are ay best heard at hame.
 Drummond,† lang syne, o' Hawthornden,
 The wyliest an' best o' men,
 Has gi'en you dishes ane or mae,
 That wad ha' gard his grinders play,
 65 Not to *roast beef*, old England's life,
 But to the auld *east nook of Fife*,
 Whare Creilian† crafts cou'd weel ha'e gi'en
 Scate-rumples* to ha'e clear'd his een;
 Than neist whan Samy's heart was faintin,
 70 He'd lang'd for scate to mak him wanton.
 Ah! willawins,* for Scotland now,
 Whan she maun stap ilk birky's mow
 Wi' eistacks,* grown as 'tware in pet
 In foreign land, or green-house het,

brose oatmeal and water
Drummond 1585–1649: Scottish poet;
 ll.65–6 refer to tunes

Creilian from Craill, nearby fishing-village

stretched stomach
 firm agile
 boiled
 onions
 mouth
 fellow
 rascal
 rustle
 stick to
 plenty
 thirst
 twist squeeze pant
 shallow cup
 grimace
 oatcake
 hind parts
 alas
 dainties

- 75 When cog* o' brose an' cutty* spoon
 Is a' our cottar* childer's boon,
 Wha thro' the week, till Sunday's speal,*
 Toil for pease-clods† an' gude lang kail.*
 Devall* then, Sirs, and never send
 For daintiths to regale a friend,
 Or, like a torch at baith ends burning,
 Your house 'll soon grow mirk and mourning.
 What's this I hear some cynic say?
 Robin, ye loun! its nae fair play;
 80 Is there nae ither subject rife
 To clap your thumb upon but Fife?
 Gi' o'er, young man, you'll meet your corning,*
 Than caption† war,* or charge o' hornings;
 Some canker'd surly sour-mow'd carline†
 Bred near the abbey o' Dumfearline,
 90 Your shoulders yet may gi'e a lounder,*
 An' be of verse the mal-confounder.
 Come on, ye blades! but ere ye tulzie,*
 Or hack our flesh wi' sword or gulzie,*
 Ne'er shaw your teeth, nor look like stink,
 95 Nor o'er an empty bicker* blink:
 What weets the wizen* an' the wyme,
 Will mend your prose and heal my rhyme.

1773

pease-clods peasemeal rolls
 caption . . . writs for debt

carline old woman

dish short
 peasant
 holiday
 cabbage
 cease
 punishment
 worse
 blow
 fight
 knife
 cup
 gullet

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

1751–1816

The son of an Irish actor, Sheridan was educated in England. His elopement with the singer, Eliza Linley, whom he eventually married, and duels with another suitor, provided hints for *The Rivals*, a great success at Covent Garden in 1775. It was followed by *St Patrick's Day* and *The Duenna*. He bought Garrick's half-share in the Drury Lane Theatre, which he ran, eventually as sole owner. *The School for Scandal* (1777) is one of the century's great comedies, and made a fortune; the burlesque rehearsal-play *The Critic* (1779) shows his awareness of theatrical absurdities. He became a member of Johnson's Club. His later career was mainly devoted to politics: a supporter of Fox and friend of the future George IV, he held various government offices and was a spectacular parliamentary orator, leading the impeachment of Warren Hastings for corruption in India. Financial difficulties followed the demolition of Drury Lane and the burning-down of its successor (1809); his last years were spent mainly in poverty.

From THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL[†]

Act IV Scene III

[Discoveries]

A library

JOSEPH SURFACE and SERVANT

JOS. SURF.: No letter from Lady Teazle?

SERV.: No, sir.

The School for Scandal If less coarse and cynical, Sheridan was well aware of Restoration comedy. In the gossipy society of *The School for Scandal*, represented by Lady Sneerwell and Sir Benjamin Backbite (the names suggesting the comic tradition), Sir Peter Teazle comes to doubt the wisdom of his recently taking a young wife. Lady Teazle is being tempted by the calculating hypocrite, Joseph Surface; in contrast (like that between Blifil and Tom Jones in Fielding's novel) his brother Charles is reckless but warm-hearted, and in love with Sir Peter's ward, Maria, whose fortune Joseph covets. Joseph's 'sentiment' consists of moral platitudes. After this climactic 'screen scene', virtue triumphs

JOS. SURF. [*aside*]: I am surprised she hasn't sent if she is prevented from coming! Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me – yet I wish I may not lose the heiress through the scrape I have drawn myself in with the wife. However, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great points in my favour.

SERV.: Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

JOS. SURF.: Hold! see whether it is or not before you go to the door – I have a particular message for you if it should be my brother.

SERV.: 'Tis her ladyship, sir. She always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.

JOS. SURF.: Stay, stay – draw that screen before the window – that will do – my opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so curious a temper – [*Servant draws the screen and exits.*] I have a difficult hand to play in this affair. Lady Teazle has lately suspected my views on Maria – but she must by no means be let into that secret, at least not till I have her more in my power.

Enter LADY TEAZLE

LADY TEAZ.: What sentiment in soliloquy! have you been very impatient now? – O lud! don't pretend to look grave. I vow I couldn't come before.

JOS. SURF.: O madam, punctuality is a species of constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.

LADY TEAZ.: Upon my word you ought to pity me. Do you know that Sir Peter is grown so ill-tempered to me of late! and so jealous of *Charles* too – that's the best of the story, isn't it?

JOS. SURF. [*aside*]: I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up.

LADY TEAZ.: I am sure I wish he would let Maria marry him, and then perhaps he would be convinced, don't you, Mr Surface?

JOS. SURF. [*aside*]: Indeed I do not. – Oh, certainly I do – for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.

LADY TEAZ.: Well, well, I'm inclined to believe you. But isn't it provoking to have the most ill-natured things said to one? And there's my friend

Lady Sneerwell has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me! and all without any foundation too – that's what vexes me.

JOS. SURF.: Aye madam, to be sure that is the provoking circumstance – without foundation! yes, yes, there's the mortification, indeed – for when a scandalous story is believed against one, there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it.

LADY TEAZ.: No, to be sure – then I'd forgive their malice – but to attack me, who am really so innocent, and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody – that is, of any friend – and then Sir Peter too – to

have him so peevish, and so suspicious, when I know the integrity of my own heart – indeed 'tis monstrous!

JOS. SURF.: But my dear Lady Teazle, 'tis your own fault if you suffer it – when a husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his wife and withdraws his confidence from her, the original compact is broke and she owes it to the honour of her sex to endeavour to outwit him.
LADY TEAZ.: Indeed! so that if he suspects me without cause, it follows that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for't.

JOS. SURF.: Undoubtedly – for your husband should never be deceived in you, and in that case it becomes *you* to be frail¹ in compliment to *his* discernment.

LADY TEAZ.: To be sure what you say is very reasonable, and when the consciousness of my own innocence –

JOS. SURF.: Ah, my dear madam, there is the great mistake – 'tis this very conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you. What is it makes you negligent of forms and careless of the world's opinion? why, the *consciousness* of your innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your conduct and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences? why, the *consciousness* of your innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper and outrageous at his suspicions? why, the *consciousness* of your own innocence!

LADY TEAZ.: 'Tis very true.

JOS. SURF.: Now my dear Lady Teazle, if you would but once make a trifling *faux pas* [slip], you can't conceive how cautious you would grow – and how ready to humour and agree with your husband.

LADY TEAZ.: Do you think so?

JOS. SURF.: Oh, I'm sure on't – and then you would find all scandal would cease at once, for in short, your character at present is like a person in a plethora² absolutely dying of too much health.

LADY TEAZ.: So, so – then I perceive your prescription is – that I must sin in my own defence – and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation.

JOS. SURF.: Exactly so upon my credit, ma'am.

LADY TEAZ.: Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny.

JOS. SURF.: An infallible one, believe me. *Prudence*, like *experience*, must be paid for.

LADY TEAZ.: Why, if my understanding were once convinced –

JOS. SURF.: Oh certainly, Madam, your understanding *should* be convinced – yes, yes – heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you *thought* wrong. No, no, I have too much honour to desire it.

frail unchaste

plethora excessive fullness of blood

LADY TEAZ.: Don't you think we may as well leave honour out of the argument?

JOS. SURF.: Ah, the ill effects of your country education I see, still remain with you.

LADY TEAZ.: I doubt they do, indeed – and I will fairly own to you, that if I could be persuaded to do wrong, it would be by Sir Peter's ill-usage sooner than your honourable logic, after all.

JOS. SURF.: Then by this hand which he is unworthy of –
[*Taking her hand*]

Enter SERVANT

'Sdeath, you blockhead – what do you want?

SERV.: I beg your pardon, sir, but I thought you wouldn't choose Sir Peter to come up without announcing him.

JOS. SURF.: Sir Peter! – Oons and the devil!

LADY TEAZ.: Sir Peter! O lud! I'm ruined! I'm ruined!

SERV.: Sir, 'twasn't I let him in.

LADY TEAZ.: O I'm undone – what will become of me now Mr Logic? – O mercy, he's on the stairs – I'll get behind here – and if ever I'm so imprudent again –
[*Goes behind the screen*]

JOS. SURF.: Give me that book.

[*Sits down. SERVANT pretends to adjust his hair*]

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE

SIR PET.: Aye, ever improving himself! – Mr Surface, Mr Surface! –

JOS. SURF.: Oh my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon. [*Gaping and throws away the book*] I have been dozing over a stupid book! well, I am much obliged to you for this call – you haven't been here I believe since I fitted up this room. Books you know are the only things I am a coxcomb³ in.

SIR PET.: 'Tis very neat indeed. Well, well, that's proper – and you make even your screen a source of knowledge – hung, I perceive, with maps.

JOS. SURF.: Oh yes, I find great use in that screen.

SIR PET.: I dare say you must – certainly – when you want to find anything in a hurry.

JOS. SURF. [*aside*]: Aye, or to hide anything in a hurry either.

SIR PET.: Well, I have a little private business –

JOS. SURF.: You needn't stay.

SERV.: No, Sir,

JOS. SURF.: Here's a chair, Sir Peter – I beg –

JOS. SURF.: No, you must never make it public.

[*To SERVANT*]

Exit.

coxcomb vain, showy person

SIR. PET.: Well, now we are alone, there is a subject, my dear friend, on which I wish to unburden my mind to you – a point of the greatest moment to my peace; in short, my good friend, Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made me extremely unhappy.

JOS. SURF.: Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it.

SIR. PET.: Yes, 'tis but too plain she has not the least regard for me – but what's worse, I have pretty good authority to suspect she must have formed an attachment to another.

JOS. SURF.: You astonish me!

SIR. PET.: Yes – and, between ourselves – I think I have discovered the person.

JOS. SURF.: How, you alarm me exceedingly!

SIR. PET.: Ah! my dear friend, I knew you would sympathise with me.

JOS. SURF.: Yes, believe me, Sir Peter, such a discovery would hurt me just as much as it would you.

SIR. PET.: I am convinced of it – ah! it is a happiness to have a friend whom one can trust even with one's family secrets. But have you no guess who I mean?

JOS. SURF.: I haven't the most distant idea – it can't be Sir Benjamin Backbite!

SIR. PET.: O no! What say you to Charles?

JOS. SURF.: My brother! impossible! –

SIR. PET.: Ah! my dear friend – the goodness of your own heart misleads you – you judge of others by yourself.

JOS. SURF.: Certainly Sir Peter, the heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slow to credit another's treachery.

SIR. PET.: True – but your brother has no sentiment – you never hear him talk so.

JOS. SURF.: Yet I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much principle –

SIR. PET.: Aye, but what's her principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?

JOS. SURF.: That's very true.

SIR. PET.: And then you know the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have a great affection for me – and if she were to be frail and I were to make it public, why the town would only laugh at me, the foolish old bachelor who had married a girl.

JOS. SURF.: That's true, to be sure – they *would* laugh.

SIR. PET.: Laugh! aye – and make ballads – and paragraphs – and the devil knows what of me.

SIR. PET.: But then again – that the nephew of my old friend, Sir Oliver, should be the person to attempt such a wrong, hurts me more nearly.

JOS. SURF.: Aye there's the point; when ingratitude bars the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.

SIR. PET.: Aye, I that was in a manner left his guardian – in whose house he had been so often entertained – who never in my life denied him my advice.

JOS. SURF.: O 'tis not to be credited! There *may* be a man capable of such baseness to be sure, but for my part, till you can give me positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. – However, if this should be proved on him, he is no longer a brother of mine! I disclaim kindred with him – for the man who can break through the laws of hospitality – and attempt the wife of his friend, deserves to be branded as the pest of society.

SIR. PET.: What a difference there is between you! What noble sentiments! JOS. SURF.: Yet I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.

SIR. PET.: I am sure I wish to think well of her – and to remove all ground of quarrel between us. She has lately reproached me more than once, with having made no settlement¹ on her – and in our last quarrel she almost hinted that she should not break her heart if I was dead. Now as we seem to differ in our ideas of expense, I have resolved she shall be her own mistress in that respect for the future – and if I *were* to die, she shall find that I have not been inattentive to her interest while living. Here my friend, are the drafts of two deeds, which I wish to have your opinion on. By one, she will enjoy eight hundred a year independent while I live, and by the other, the bulk of my fortune after my death.

JOS. SURF.: This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous. – [*Aside*] I wish it may not corrupt² my pupil.

SIR. PET.: Yes, I am determined she shall have no cause to complain, though I would not have her acquainted with the latter instance of my affection yet awhile.

JOS. SURF.: Nor I, if I could help it.

SIR. PET.: And now my dear friend, if you please we will talk over the situation of your hopes with *Maria*. [*Aside*]

JOS. SURF.: No, no, Sir Peter; another time if you please.

SIR. PET.: I am sensibly chagrined at the little progress you seem to make in her affection.

JOS. SURF.: I beg you will not mention it – what are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate! [*Softly*] – 'Sdeath, I should be ruined every way!

SIR. PET.: And though you are so averse to my acquainting Lady Teazle with your passion, I am sure she's not your enemy in the affair.

JOS. SURF.: Pray Sir Peter, now oblige me. – I am really too much affected by the subject we have been speaking on to bestow a thought on my

settlement formal property arrangement

corrupt ruin J's influence over Lady T.

own concerns. The man who is entrusted with his friend's distresses
can never –

210

Enter SERVANT

Well, sir?

SERV.: Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentleman in the street, and
says he knows you are within.

JOS. SURF.: 'Sdeath, blockhead – I'm not within – I'm out for the day.

SIR PET.: Stay – hold – a thought has struck me – you shall be at home.

215

JOS. SURF.: Well, well, let him up. [*Exit SERVANT*] He'll interrupt Sir Peter –
however –

SIR PET.: Now my good friend, oblige me I entreat you. Before Charles

comes, let me conceal myself somewhere. Then do you tax^t him on
the point we have been talking on, and his answers may satisfy me
at once.

220

JOS. SURF.: O fie, Sir Peter – would you have me join in so mean a trick –
to trepan^t my brother to –!

SIR PET.: Nay, you tell me you are *sure* he is innocent – if so, you do him
the greatest service by giving him an opportunity to clear himself,
and, you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me –
here behind the screen will be [*goes to the screen*] – hey! what the
devil! there seems to be *one* listener here already – I'll swear I saw a
petticoat.

225

JOS. SURF.: Ha! ha! ha! – well, this is ridiculous enough. I'll tell you, Sir
Peter, though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable
character, yet you know it doesn't follow that one is to be an absolute
Joseph^t either! Hark'ee! 'tis a little French milliner, a silly rogue that
plagues me – and having some character, on your coming she ran
behind the screen.

235

SIR PET.: Ah, you rogue! – but egad, she has overheard all I have been
saying of my wife.

JOS. SURF.: O 'twill never go any further, you may depend on't!

SIR PET.: No! – then efaith, let her hear it out. – Here's a closet will do
as well.

240

JOS. SURF.: Well, go in then.

SIR PET.: Sly rogue! sly rogue!

JOS. SURF.: A very narrow escape, indeed! and a curious situation I'm in,
to part man and wife in this manner.

LADY TEAZ. [*peeping from the screen*]: Couldn't I steal off?

245

JOS. SURF.: Keep close, my angel –

SIR PET. [*peeping out*]: Joseph, tax him home! –

*tax accuse
trepan ensnare*

Joseph in Genesis 39, he resists seduction

JOS. SURF.: Back, my dear friend!

LADY TEAZ. [*peeping*]: Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in?

JOS. SURF.: Be still, my life –

SIR PET. [*peeping*]: You're sure the little milliner won't blab?

JOS. SURF.: In! in! – my good Sir Peter – 'fore gad, I wish I had a key to
the door.

250

Enter CHARLES SURFACE

CHAS. SURF.: Hallo! brother, what has been the matter? your fellow would
not let me up at first. What, have you had a Jew^t or a wench with
you?

255

JOS. SURF.: Neither brother, I assure you.

CHAS. SURF.: But – what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had
been with you.

JOS. SURF.: He was, brother – but, hearing *you* were coming he did not
choose to stay.

260

CHAS. SURF.: What, was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow
money of him!

JOS. SURF.: No, sir – but I am sorry to find Charles that you have lately
given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.

265

CHAS. SURF.: Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men. But
how so, pray?

JOS. SURF.: To be plain with you, brother, he thinks you are endeavouring
to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.

CHAS. SURF.: Who, I! O lud! not I, upon my word. – Ha! ha! ha! so the
old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he? – or
what's worse, has her ladyship discovered that she has an old
husband?

270

JOS. SURF.: This is no subject to jest on, brother. – He who can laugh –

CHAS. SURF.: True, true, brother, as you were going to say – then seriously,
I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my
honour.

275

JOS. SURF.: Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this.

[*Aloud*]

CHAS. SURF.: To be sure I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a
fancy to me – but upon my soul, I never gave her the least
encouragement. – Besides, you know my attachment to Maria.

280

JOS. SURF.: But sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest
partiality for you –

CHAS. SURF.: Why, look'ee, Joseph, I hope I shall never deliberately do a
dishonourable action – but if a pretty woman were purposely to

285

Jew
that is, moneylender

throw herself in my way – and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father –

JOS. SURF.: Well! –

CHAS. SURF.: Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your morality, that's all. – But brother, do you know now that you surprise me exceedingly, by naming *me* with Lady Teazle – for faith, I always understood *you* were her favourite.

JOS. SURF.: O, for shame, Charles – this retort is foolish.

CHAS. SURF.: Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances –

JOS. SURF.: Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest –

CHAS. SURF.: Egad, I'm serious! don't you remember – one day when I called here –

JOS. SURF.: Nay, prithee, Charles –

CHAS. SURF.: And found you together –

JOS. SURF.: Zounds, sir, I insist –

CHAS. SURF.: And another time when your servant –

JOS. SURF.: Brother, brother, a word with you! – [*Aside*] Gad, I must stop him.

CHAS. SURF.: Informed me, I say, that –

JOS. SURF.: Hush! – I beg your pardon, but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying – I knew you would clear yourself or I should not have consented.

CHAS. SURF.: How, Sir Peter! – where is he?

JOS. SURF.: Softly, there!

[*Points to the closet*]

CHAS. SURF.: Oh, 'fore heaven, I'll have him out. – Sir Peter, come forth –

JOS. SURF.: No, no –

CHAS. SURF.: I say, Sir Peter, come into court. – [*Pulls in SIR PETER*] What, my old guardian! – What – turn inquisitor and take evidence incog.[†] SIR PET.: Give me your hand, Charles – I believe I have suspected you wrongfully – but you mustn't be angry with Joseph – 'twas my plan.

CHAS. SURF.: Indeed! –

SIR PET.: But I acquit you. – I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did. What I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

CHAS. SURF.: Egad then, 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more – wasn't it, Joseph?

SIR PET.: Ah! you would have retorted on him.

CHAS. SURF.: Aye, aye, that was a joke.

SIR PET.: Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.

CHAS. SURF.: But you might as well have suspected him as me in this matter, for all that. Mightn't he, Joseph?

incog. incognito: hidden identity

SIR PET.: Well, well, I believe you.

JOS. SURF.: Would they were both out of the room! [*Aside*]

SIR PET.: And in future, perhaps, we may not be such strangers.

Enter SERVANT who whispers JOSEPH SURFACE

330 JOS. SURF.: Lady Sneerwell! – stop her by all means – [*Exit SERVANT*] Gentlemen – I beg pardon – I must wait on you downstairs – here's a person come on particular business.

CHAS. SURF.: Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I haven't met a long time, and I have something to say to him.

335 JOS. SURF.: They must not be left together. – [*Aside*] Sir Peter, not a word of the away, and return directly. – [*Aside*] Sir Peter, not a word of the French milliner.

Exit JOSEPH SURFACE

SIR PET.: O not for the world! – Ah, Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of sentiment – well! there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment!

CHAS. SURF.: Pshaw! He is too moral by half, and so apprehensive of his good name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest into his house as a girl.

345 SIR PET.: No, no – come, come – you wrong him. No, no, Joseph is no rake, but he is not such a saint in that respect either – I have a great mind to tell him – we should have a laugh! [*Aside*]

CHAS. SURF.: Oh, hang him! He's a very anchorite, a young hermit.

SIR PET.: Hark'ee, you must not abuse him. He may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

CHAS. SURF.: Why, you won't tell him?

SIR PET.: No – but – this way. – [*Aside*] Egad, I'll tell him! – Hark'ee! have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph?

CHAS. SURF.: I should like it of all things.

355 SIR PET.: Then, efaith we will – I'll be quit with him for discovering[†] me. [*Aside*] – He had a girl with him when I called.

CHAS. SURF.: What, Joseph! you jest.

SIR PET.: Hush! – a little French milliner – [*whispers*] and the best of the jest is – she's in the room now.

360 CHAS. SURF.: The devil she is!

SIR PET.: Hush – I tell you –

CHAS. SURF.: Behind the screen – 'slife, let's unveil her!

SIR PET.: No, no! He's coming – you shan't, indeed!

CHAS. SURF.: O egad! we'll have a peep at the little milliner.

discovering revealing

[*Points*]

[*Half aside*]

365 SIR PET.: Not for the world! – Joseph will never forgive me.

CHAS. SURF.: I'll stand by you –

SIR PET. [*struggling with Charles*]: Odds, here he is –

JOSEPH SURFACE *enters just as CHARLES
throws down the screen*

CHAS. SURF.: Lady Teazle! by all that's wonderful!

SIR PET.: Lady Teazle! by all that's horrible!

370 CHAS. SURF.: Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners I ever
saw – egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves here at
hide and seek – and I don't see who is out of the secret! – Shall I beg
your ladyship to inform me! – not a word! Brother, will you please
to explain this matter? – what! Morality dumb too? – Sir Peter,
375 though I *found* you in the dark, perhaps you are not so now. All
mute! Well tho' I can make nothing of the affair I suppose you
perfectly understand one another – so I'll leave you to yourselves. –
[*Going*] Brother, I'm sorry to find you *have given that worthy man*
so much uneasiness! – Sir Peter, there's nothing in the world so noble
380 as a man of sentiment!

Exit CHARLES

[*Stand for some time looking at each other*]

JOS. SURF.: Sir Peter – notwithstanding I confess that appearances are
against me – if you will afford me your patience – I make no doubt
but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.

SIR PET.: If you please –

385 JOS. SURF.: The fact is, sir – That Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions
to your ward Maria – I say sir, Lady Teazle being apprehensive of
the jealousy of your temper – and knowing my friendship to the
family – she, sir, I say – called here – in order that I might explain
those pretensions – but on your coming – being apprehensive as I
said of your jealousy – she withdrew – and this, you may depend
390 on't is the whole truth of the matter.

SIR PET.: A very clear account upon my word, and I dare swear the lady
will vouch for every article of it.

LADY TEAZ. [*coming forward*]: For not one word of it, Sir Peter.

395 SIR PET.: How! don't you even think it worth while to agree in the lie?

LADY TEAZ.: There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman
has told you.

SIR PET.: I believe you, upon my soul, Ma'am!

JOS. SURF. [*aside*]: 'Sdeath Madam, will you betray me?

LADY TEAZ.: Good Mr Hypocrite, by your leave I will speak for myself.

400 SIR PET.: Aye, let her alone, sir – you'll find she'll make out a better story
than *you* without prompting.

LADY TEAZ.: Hear me, Sir Peter – I came hither, on no matter relating to

405 your ward, and even ignorant of this gentleman's pretensions to her –
but I came, seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to
his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice *your* honour to his baseness.

SIR PET.: Now I believe, the truth is coming indeed –

JOS. SURF.: The woman's mad!

410 LADY TEAZ.: No, sir – she has recovered her senses, and your own arts
have furnished her with the means. – Sir Peter, I do not expect you
to credit me – but the tenderness you expressed for me when I am
sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has penetrated to my
heart and had I left the place without the shame of this discovery,
my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my gratitude. – As
415 for that smooth-tongue hypocrite, who would have seduced the wife
of his too credulous friend while he affected honourable addresses to
his ward – I behold him now in a light so truly despicable, that I
shall never again respect myself for having listened to him. *Exit*

JOS. SURF.: Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, heaven knows –

420 SIR PET.: That you are a villain! – and so I leave you to your conscience.

JOS. SURF.: You are too rash, Sir Peter – you shall hear me! the man who
shuts out conviction by refusing to –

SIR PET.: Oh! –

They go out, JOSEPH SURFACE following and speaking

Fanny Burney

1752–1840

The daughter of Dr Charles Burney, the historian of music and friend of Johnson, Fanny Burney spent much of her early life mixing with the learned and fashionable. Her epistolary novel *Evelina* (1778) won great fame, and was followed by *Cecilia*, *Camilla* and *The Wanderer*. Her main theme is the exposure of the young heroine to a complex world, in a manner which influenced her admirer, Jane Austen. From 1786 she was Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte, acting as deputy to Mrs Schwelkenberg, whose behaviour often seemed harsh and tyrannical. In 1793 Fanny Burney married General d'Arblay, a refugee from the French Revolution, and with him was interned by Napoleon in the following decade. Her early diaries describe both the literary world and the milieu of the Royal Family during a period when George III was increasingly suffering from the bouts of mental instability which dogged his later life.

From DIARY

[Chased by the King]

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND 1789. What an adventure had I this morning! one that has occasioned me the severest personal terror I ever experienced in my life.

5 Sir Lucas Pepys persisting that exercise and air were absolutely necessary to save me from illness, I have continued my walks, varying my gardens from Richmond to Kew, according to the accounts I received of the movements of the King. For this I had her Majesty's permission, on the representation of Sir Lucas.

10 This morning, when I received my intelligence of the King from Dr John Willis, I begged to know where I might walk in safety? 'In Kew Gardens,' he said, 'as the King would be in Richmond.'

'Should any unfortunate circumstance,' I cried, 'at any time, occasion my being seen by his Majesty, do not mention my name, but let me run off without call or notice.'

15 This he promised. Everybody, indeed, is ordered to keep out of sight.

20 Taking, therefore, the time I had most at command, I strolled into the gardens. I had proceeded, in my quick way, nearly half the round, when I suddenly perceived, through some trees, two or three figures. Relying on the instructions of Dr John, I concluded them to be workmen and gardeners; yet tried to look sharp, and in so doing, as they were less shaded, I thought I saw the person of his Majesty!

25 Alarmed past all possible expression, I waited not to know more, but turning back, ran off with all my might. But what was my terror to hear myself pursued! – to hear the voice of the King himself loudly and hoarsely calling after me: 'Miss Burney! Miss Burney!'

30 I protest I was ready to die. I knew not in what state he might be at the time; I only knew the orders to keep out of his way were universal; that the Queen would highly disapprove of any unauthorised meeting, and that the very action of my running away might deeply, in his present irritable state, offend him. Nevertheless, on I ran, too terrified to stop, and in search of some short passage, for the garden is full of little labyrinths, by which I might escape.

35 The steps still pursued me, and still the poor hoarse and altered voice rang in my ears – more and more footsteps resounded frightfully behind me – the attendants all running, to catch their eager master, and the voices of the two Doctor Willis loudly exhorting him not to heat himself so unmercifully.

40 Heavens, how I ran! I do not think I should have felt the hot lava from Vesuvius – at least not the hot cinders – had I so run during its eruption. My feet were not sensible that they even touched the ground.

45 Soon after, I heard other voices, shriller, though less nervous, call out: 'Stop! stop! stop!'

I could by no means consent; I knew not what was purposed, but I recollected fully my agreement with Dr John that very morning, that I should decamp if surprised, and not be named.

My own fears and repugnance, also, after a flight and disobedience like this, were doubled in the thought of not escaping: I knew not to what I might be exposed, should the malady be then high, and take the turn of resentment. Still, therefore, on I flew; and such was my speed, so almost incredible to relate or recollect, that I fairly believe no one of the whole party could have overtaken me, if these words, from one of the attendants, had not reached me: 'Doctor Willis begs you to stop!'

55 'I cannot! I cannot!' I answered, still flying on, when he called out: 'You must, ma'am; it hurts the King to run.'

Then, indeed, I stopped – in a state of fear really amounting to agony. I turned round, I saw the two Doctors had got the King between them, and three attendants of Dr Willis's were hovering about. They all slackened their pace, as they saw me stand still; but such was the excess

60 of my alarm, that I was wholly insensible to the effects of a race which, at any other time, would have required an hour's recruit.[†]

As they approached, some little presence of mind happily came to my command: it occurred to me that, to appease the wrath of my flight, I must now show some confidence: I therefore faced them as undauntedly as I was able, only charging the nearest of the attendants to stand by my side.

65 When they were within a few yards of me, the King called out: 'Why did you run away?'

Shocked at a question impossible to answer, yet a little assured by the mild tone of his voice, I instantly forced myself forward, to meet him, though the internal sensation, which satisfied me this was a step the most proper to appease his suspicions and displeasure, was so violently combated by the tremor of my nerves, that I fairly think I may reckon it the greatest effort of personal courage I have ever made.

75 The effort answered: I looked up, and met all his wonted benignity of countenance, though something still of wildness in his eyes. Think, however, of my surprise, to feel him put both his hands round my two shoulders, and then kiss my cheek!

80 I wonder I did not really sink, so exquisite was my affright when I saw him spread out his arms! Involuntarily, I concluded he meant to crush me: but the Willises, who have never seen him till this fatal illness, not knowing how very extraordinary an action this was from him, simply smiled and looked pleased, supposing, perhaps, it was his customary salutation!

85 He now spoke in such terms of his pleasure in seeing me, that I soon lost the whole of my terror; astonishment to find him so nearly well, and gratification to see him so pleased, removed every uneasy feeling, and the joy that succeeded, in my conviction of his recovery, made me ready to throw myself at his feet to express it.

90 What a conversation followed! When he saw me fearless, he grew more and more alive, and made me walk close by his side, away from the attendants, and even the Willises themselves, who, to indulge him, retreated. I own myself not completely composed, but alarm I could entertain no more.

95 Everything that came uppermost in his mind he mentioned; he seemed to have just such remains of his flightiness as heated his imagination without deranging his reason, and robbed him of all control over his speech, though nearly in his perfect state of mind as to his opinions.

100 What did he not say! He opened his whole heart to me – expounded all his sentiments, and acquainted me with all his intentions.

recruit recovery

He assured me he was quite well – as well as he had ever been in his life; and then inquired how I did, and how I went on? and whether I was more comfortable?

105 If these questions, in their implication, surprised me, imagine how that surprise must increase when he proceeded to explain them! He asked after the coadjutrix,[†] laughing, and saying: 'Never mind her – don't be oppressed – I am your friend! don't let her cast you down! I know you have a hard time of it – but don't mind her!'

110 Almost thunderstruck with astonishment, I merely curtsied to his kind 'I am your friend,' and said nothing.

Then presently he added: 'Stick to your father – stick to your own family – let them be your objects.'

How readily I assented!

115 Again he repeated all I have just written, nearly in the same words, but ended it more seriously; he suddenly stopped and held me to stop too, and putting his hand on his breast, in the most solemn manner, he gravely and slowly said: 'I will protect you! – I promise you that – and therefore depend upon me!'

120 I thanked him; and the Willises, thinking him rather too elevated, came to propose my walking on. 'No, no, no!' he cried, a hundred times in a breath; and their good humour prevailed, and they let him again walk on with his new companion.

125 He then gave me a history of his pages, animating almost into a rage, as he related his subjects of displeasure with them, particularly with Mr Ernst, who, he told me, had been brought up by himself. I hope his ideas upon these men are the result of the mistakes of his malady.

130 Then he asked me some questions that very greatly distressed me, relating to information given him in his illness, from various motives, but which he suspected to be false, and which I knew he had reason to suspect: yet was it most dangerous to set anything right, as I was not aware what might be the views of their having been stated wrong. I was as discreet as I knew how to be, and I hope I did no mischief; but this was the worst part of the dialogue.

135 He next talked to me a great deal of my dear father, and made a thousand inquiries concerning his *History of Music*. This brought him to his favourite theme, Handel;[†] and he told me innumerable anecdotes of him, and particularly that celebrated tale of Handel's saying of himself, when a boy: 'While that boy lives, my music will never want a

coadjutrix Mrs Schwellenberg, Keeper of the

Robes

Handel George Frideric (1685–1759),

German-born composer of opera and oratorio (*Messiah*), spent most of his life in England

140 protector.' And this, he said, I might relate to my father.

Then he ran over most of his oratorios, attempting to sing the subjects of several airs and choruses, but so dreadfully hoarse that the sound was terrible.

145 Dr Willis, quite alarmed at this exertion, feared he would do himself harm, and again proposed a separation. 'No! no! no!' he exclaimed, 'not yet; I have something I must just mention first.'

Dr Willis, delighted to comply, even when uneasy at compliance, again gave way.

150 The good King then greatly affected me. He began upon my revered old friend, Mrs Delany;[†] and he spoke of her with such warmth – such kindness! 'She was my friend!' he cried, 'and I loved her as a friend! I have made a memorandum when I lost her – I will show it you.'

He pulled out a pocket-book, and rummaged some time, but to no purpose.

155 The tears stood in his eyes – he wiped them, and Dr Willis again became very anxious. 'Come, sir,' he cried, 'now do you come in and let the lady go on her walk – come, now, you have talked a long while – so we'll go in – if your Majesty pleases.'

160 'No, no!' he cried, 'I want to ask her a few questions; I have lived so long out of the world, I know nothing!'

He then told me he was very much dissatisfied with several of his state officers, and meant to form an entire new establishment. He took a paper out of his pocket-book, and showed me his new list.

165 This was the wildest thing that passed; and Dr John Willis now seriously urged our separating; but he would not consent; he had only three more words to say, he declared, and again he conquered.

170 He now spoke of my father, with still more kindness, and told me he ought to have had the post of Master of the Band, and not that little poor musician Parsons, who was not fit for it: 'But Lord Salisbury,^{††} he cried, 'used your father very ill in that business, and so he did me! However, I have dashed out his name, and I shall put your father's in – as soon as I get loose again!'

This again – how affecting was this!

175 'And what,' cried he, 'has your father got, at last? Nothing but that poor thing at Chelsea?^{††} Oh, fie! fie! fie! But never mind! I will take care of him! I will do it myself!'

Then presently he added: 'As to Lord Salisbury, he is out already, as this memorandum will show you, and so are many more. I shall be

Mrs Delany (1700–88) had been a friend of
Swift and Pope
Lord Salisbury Lord Chamberlain; the
episode was in 1786

Chelsea Burney was organist at Chelsea
Hospital

180 much better served; and when once I get away, I shall rule with a rod of iron!

This was very unlike himself, and startled the two good doctors, who could not bear to cross him, and were exulting at my seeing his great amendment, but yet grew quite uneasy at his earnestness and volubility.

185 Finding we now must part, he stopped to take leave, and renewed again his charges about the coadjutrix. 'Never mind her!' he cried, 'depend upon me! I will be your friend as long as I live! – I here pledge myself to be your friend!' And then he saluted me again just as at the meeting, and suffered me to go on.

190 What a scene! How variously was I affected by it! But upon the whole, how inexpressibly thankful to see him so nearly himself – so little removed from recovery!

195 I went very soon after to the Queen, to whom I was most eager to avow the meeting, and how little I could help it. Her astonishment, and her earnestness to hear every particular, were very great. I told her almost all. Some few things relating to the distressing questions I could not repeat; nor many things said of Mrs Schwellenberg, which would much, and very needlessly, have hurt her.

200 FEBRUARY 17TH. The times are now most interesting and critical. Dr Willis confided to me this morning that to-day the King is to see the Chancellor. How important will be the result of his appearance! The whole national fate depends upon it!

205 WEDNESDAY, 18TH. I had this morning the highest gratification, the purest feeling of delight, I have been regaled with for many months: I saw, from the road, the King and Queen, accompanied by Dr Willis, walking in Richmond Gardens, near the farm, arm in arm! It was a pleasure that quite melted me, after a separation so bitter, scenes so distressful – to witness such harmony and security! Heaven bless and preserve them! was all I could incessantly say while I kept in their sight. . . .

210 The King I have seen again – in the Queen's dressing-room. On opening the door, there he stood! He smiled! He smiled at my start, and saying he had waited on purpose to see me, added: 'I am quite well now – I was nearly so when I saw you before – but I could overtake you better now! And then he left the room.'

215 I was quite melted with joy and thankfulness at this so entire restoration.

George Crabbe

1754–1832

Crabbe was born in the fishing-village of Aldeburgh in Suffolk, about which he often wrote. After practising there as a doctor, he sought a poetic career in London, but was only rescued from destitution by Edmund Burke, who encouraged him to take orders and provide himself with security (he was not a very active clergyman). Burke helped him publish *The Library* (1781), and introduced him to members of The Club, notably Johnson, who gave advice on *The Village* (1783), a grimly realistic antidote to conventional pastoral poetry, which made his name. Following his marriage, he published little for twenty years, although he wrote and burned three novels. *The Parish Register* (1807) was followed by *The Borough* (1810), a descriptive and narrative poem based on Aldeburgh, including the tale of 'Peter Grimes', used for Benjamin Britten's opera. *Tales in Verse* (1812) and *Tales of the Hall* (1819) were further collections of narratives. Although he wrote well into the Romantic period, Crabbe usually persisted with the heroic couplets of an earlier age, and offered unadorned views of nature: his conservatism found sympathetic responses in such admirers of the 'Augustan' manner as Byron and Jane Austen.

From THE VILLAGE

[*Pastoral?*]

The village life, and every care that reigns
O'er youthful peasants and declining swains;
What labour yields, and what, that labour past,
Age, in its hour of languor, finds at last;
What form the real picture of the poor,
Demand a song – the muse can give no more.

Fled are those times, when, in harmonious strains,
The rustic poet praised his native plains:
No shepherds now, in smooth alternate verse,
Their country's beauty or their nymphs' rehearse;

10

Yet still for these we frame the tender strain,
Still in our lays fond Corydons[†] complain,
And shepherds' boys their amorous pains reveal,
The only pains, alas! they never feel.
On Mincio's[‡] banks, in Cæsar's bounteous reign,
If Tityrus found the Golden Age[†] again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan[†] song?
From truth and nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where fancy, leads the way?
Yes, thus the muses sing of happy swains,
Because the muses never knew their pains:
They boast their peasants' pipes;[†] but peasants now
Resign their pipes and plod behind the plough;
And few, amid the rural-tribe, have time
To number syllables, and play with rhyme;
Save honest Duck,[†] what son of verse could share
The poet's rapture and the peasant's care?
Or the great labours of the fields degrade,
With the new period of a poorer trade?
From this chief cause these idle praises spring,
That themes so easy few forbear to sing;
For no deep thought the trifling subjects ask;
To sing of shepherds is an easy task:
The happy youth assumes the common strain,
A nymph his mistress, and himself a swain;
With no sad scenes he clouds his tuneful prayer,
But all, to look like her, is painted fair.
I grant indeed that fields and flocks have charms
For him that grazes or for him that farms;
But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place,
And see the mid-day sun, with fervid ray,
On their bare heads and dewy temples play;
While some, with feeble heads and fainter hearts,
Deplore their fortune, yet sustain their parts –
Then shall I dare these real ills to hide
In tinsel trappings of poetic pride?

Corydon shepherd in Virgil's *Eclogues*, where
Tityrus also appears
Mincio river near Virgil's birthplace, Mantua;
he flourished under Augustus Caesar
Golden Age mythical time of harmony,
celebrated in pastorals; II.15–20 are by
Johnson

pipes for pastoral music
Duck Stephen Duck (1705–56), the Thresher
Poet, patronised by Queen Caroline

No; cast by fortune on a frowning coast,
 Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast;
 Where other cares than those the muse relates,
 And other shepherds dwell with other mates;
 By such examples taught, I paint the cot,*
 As truth will paint it, and as bards will not:
 Nor you, ye poor, of lettered scorn complain,
 To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain;
 O'ercome by labour, and bowed down by time,
 Feel you the barren flattery of a rhyme?
 Can poets soothe you, when you pine for bread,
 By winding myrtles round your ruined shed?
 Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'erpower,
 Or glad with airy mirth the toilsome hour?
 Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
 Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor;
 From thence a length of burning sand appears,
 Where the thin harvest waves its withered ears;
 Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
 Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye:
 There thistles[†] stretch their prickly arms afar,
 And to the ragged infant threaten war;
 There poppies nodding mock the hope of toil;
 There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
 Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf,
 The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;
 O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
 And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade;
 With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
 And a sad splendour vainly shines around.
 So looks the nymph whom wretched arts adorn,
 Betrayed by man, then left for man to scorn;
 Whose cheek in vain assumes the mimic rose,
 While her sad eyes the troubled breast disclose;
 Whose outward splendour is but folly's dress,
 Exposing most, when most it gilds distress.
 Here joyless roam a wild amphibious race,
 With sullen woe displayed in every face;
 Who, far from civil arts and social fly,
 And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye. . . .

thistles first of a series of weeds threatening the crops

[*Rural Life*]

Ye gentle souls, who dream of rural ease,
 Whom the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please;
 Go! if the peaceful cot your praises share,
 Go look within, and ask if peace be there;
 If peace be his – that drooping weary sire,
 Or theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire;
 Or hers, that matron pale, whose trembling hand
 Turns on the wretched hearth th' expiring brand!
 Nor yet can time itself obtain for these
 Life's latest comforts, due respect and ease;
 For yonder see that hoary swain, whose age
 Can with no cares except its own engage;
 Who, propt on that rude staff, looks up to see
 The bare arms broken from the withering tree,
 On which, a boy, he climbed the loftiest bough,
 Then his first joy, but his sad emblem now.
 He once was chief in all the rustic trade;
 His steady hand the straightest furrow made;
 Full many a prize he won, and still is proud
 To find the triumphs of his youth allowed;
 A transient pleasure sparkles in his eyes,
 He hears and smiles, then thinks again and sighs:
 For now he journeys to his grave in pain;
 The rich disdain him; nay, the poor disdain:
 Alternate masters now their slave command,
 Urge the weak efforts of his feeble hand,
 And, when his age attempts its task in vain,
 With ruthless taunts, of lazy poor complain.
 Oft may you see him, when he tends the sheep,
 His winter charge, beneath the hillock weep;
 Oft hear him murmur to the winds that blow
 O'er his white locks and bury them in snow,
 When, roused by rage and muttering in the morn,
 He mends the broken edge with icy thorn: –
 'Why do I live, when I desire to be
 At once from life and life's long labour free?
 Like leaves in spring, the young are blown away,
 Without the sorrows of a slow decay;
 I, like yon withered leaf, remain behind,
 Nipt by the frost, and shivering in the wind;
 There it abides till younger buds come on,
 As I, now all my fellow-swains are gone;

215 Then, from the rising generation thrust,
 It falls, like me, unnoticed to the dust.
 'These fruitful fields, these numerous flocks I see,
 Are others' gain, but killing cares to me;
 To me the children of my youth are lords,
 Cool in their looks, but hasty in their words:
 220 Wants of their own demand their care; and who
 Feels his own want and succours others too?
 A lonely, wretched man, in pain I go,
 None need my help, and none relieve my woe;
 Then let my bones beneath the turf be laid,
 225 And men forget the wretch they would not aid.'
 Thus, groan the old, till, by disease oppressed,
 They taste a final woe, and then they rest.
 Theirs is yon House that holds the parish poor,
 Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
 230 There, where the putrid vapours, flagging, play,
 And the full wheel* hums doleful through the day;
 There children dwell who know no parents' care;
 Parents, who know no children's love, dwell there!
 Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,
 235 Forsaken wives, and mothers never wed;
 Dejected widows with unheeded tears,
 And crippled age with more than childhood fears;
 The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they!
 The moping idiot, and the madman gay.
 240 Here too the sick their final doom receive,
 Here brought, amid the scenes of grief, to grieve,
 Where the loud groans from some sad chamber flow,
 Mixt with the clamours of the crowd below;
 Here, sorrowing, they each kindred sorrow scan,
 245 And the cold charities of man to man:
 Whose laws indeed for ruined age provide,
 And strong compulsion plucks the scrap from pride;
 But still that scrap is bought with many a sigh,
 And pride embitters what it can't deny. . . .

1783

spinning-wheel

PETER GRIMES

Old Peter Grimes made fishing his employ,
 His wife he cabined with him and his boy,
 And seemed that life laborious to enjoy:
 To town came quiet Peter with his fish,
 5 And had of all a civil word and wish.
 He left his trade upon the Sabbath-day,
 And took young Peter in his hand to pray:
 But soon the stubborn boy from care broke loose,
 At first refused, then added his abuse:
 10 His father's love he scorned, his power defied,
 But being drunk, wept sorely when he died.
 Yes! then he wept, and to his mind there came
 Much of his conduct, and he felt the shame, —
 How he had oft the good old man reviled,
 15 And never paid the duty of a child;
 How, when the father in his Bible read,
 He in contempt and anger left the shed;
 'It is the word of life,' the parent cried;
 — 'This is the life itself,' the boy replied;
 20 And while old Peter in amazement stood,
 Gave the hot spirit* to his boiling blood: —
 How he, with oath and furious speech, began
 To prove his freedom and assert the man;
 And when the parent checked his impious rage,
 25 How he had cursed the tyranny of age, —
 Nay, once had dealt the sacrilegious blow
 On his bare head, and laid his parent low;
 The father groaned — 'If thou art old,' said he,
 And hast a son — thou wilt remember me:
 30 Thy mother left me in a happy time,
 Thou killedst not her — Heaven spares the double crime.'
 On an inn-settle, in his maudlin grief,
 This he resolved, and drank for his relief.
 35 Now lived the youth in freedom, but debarred
 From constant pleasure, and he thought it hard;
 Hard that he could not every wish obey,
 But must awhile relinquish ale and play;
 Hard! that he could not to his cards attend,
 40 But must acquire the money he would spend.
 With greedy eye he looked on all he saw,
 He knew not justice, and he laughed at law;
 On all he marked, he stretched his ready hand;

alcohol

He fished by water and he filched by land;
 Oft in the night has Peter dropped his oar,
 Fled from his boat, and sought for prey on shore;
 Oft up the hedge-row glided, on his back
 Bearing the orchard's produce in a sack,
 Or farm-yard load, tugged fiercely from the stack;
 And as these wrongs to greater numbers rose,
 The more he looked on all men as his foes.
 He built a mud-walled hovel, where he kept
 His various wealth, and there he oft-times slept;
 But no success could please his cruel soul,
 He wished for one to trouble and control;
 He wanted some obedient boy to stand
 And bear the blow of his outrageous hand;
 And hoped to find in some propitious hour
 A feeling creature subject to his power.

Peter had heard there were in London then, –
 Still have they being! – workhouse-clearing men,
 Who, undisturbed by feelings just or kind,
 Would parish-boys¹ to needy tradesmen bind:
 They in their want a trifling sum would take,
 And toiling slaves of piteous orphans make.
 Such Peter sought, and when a lad was found,
 The sum was dealt him, and the slave was bound.
 Some few in town observed in Peter's trap
 A boy, with jacket blue and woollen cap;

But none enquired how Peter used the rope,
 Or what the bruise, that made the stripling stoop;
 None could the ridges on his back behold,
 None sought him shivering in the winter's cold;
 None put the question, – 'Peter, dost thou give
 The boy his food? – What, man! the lad must live:
 Consider, Peter, let the child have bread,
 He'll serve thee better if he's stroked and fed.'
 None reasoned thus – and some, on hearing cries,
 Said calmly, 'Grimes is at his exercise.'

Pinned, beaten, cold, pinched, threatened, and abused –
 His efforts punished and his food refused, –
 Awake tormented, – soon aroused from sleep, –
 Struck if he wept, and yet compelled to weep,

parish-boys parish workhouses apprenticed
 pauper children to tradesmen (as cheap
 labour)

The trembling boy dropped down and strove to pray,
 Received a blow, and trembling turned away,
 Or sobbed and hid his piteous face; – while he,
 The savage master, grinned in horrid glee:
 He'd now the power he ever loved to show,
 A feeling being subject to his blow.

Thus lived the lad, in hunger, peril, pain,
 His tears despised, his supplications vain:
 Compelled by fear to lie, by need to steal,
 His bed uneasy and unblessed his meal,
 For three sad years the boy his tortures bore,
 And then his pains and trials were no more.

'How died he, Peter?' when the people said,
 He growled – 'I found him lifeless in his bed;
 Then tried for softer tone, and sighed, 'Poor Sam is dead.'
 Yet murmurs were there, and some questions asked –
 How he was fed, how punished, and how tasked?

Much they suspected, but they little proved,
 And Peter passed untroubled and unmoved.

Another boy with equal ease was found,
 The money granted, and the victim bound;
 And what his fate? – One night it chanced he fell
 From the boat's mast and perished in her well,
 Where fish were living kept, and where the boy
 (So reasoned men) could not himself destroy: –

'Yes! so it was,' said Peter, 'in his play,
 (For he was idle both by night and day,
 He climbed the main-mast and then fell below;' –
 Then showed his corpse, and pointed to the blow:
 'What said the jury?' – they were long in doubt,
 But sturdy Peter faced the matter out:

So they dismissed him, saying at the time,
 'Keep fast your hatchway when you've boys who climb.'
 This hit the conscience, and he coloured more
 Than for the closest questions put before.
 Thus all his fears the verdict set aside,
 And at the slave-shop Peter still applied.

Then came a boy, of manners soft and mild, –
 Our seamen's wives with grief beheld the child;
 All thought (the poor themselves) that he was one
 Of gentle blood, some noble sinner's son,
 Who had, belike, deceived some humble maid,

jury at the inquest into the cause of death

125 Whom he had first seduced and then betrayed: —
 However this, he seemed a gracious lad,
 In grief submissive and with patience sad.

130 Passive he laboured, till his slender frame
 Bent with his loads, and he at length was lame:
 Strange that a frame so weak could bear so long
 The grossest insult and the foulest wrong;

135 But there were causes — in the town they gave
 Fire, food, and comfort, to the gentle slave;
 And though stern Peter, with a cruel hand,
 And knotted rope, enforced the rude command,
 Yet he considered what he'd lately felt,
 And his vile blows with selfish pity dealt.

140 One day such draughts the cruel fisher made,
 He could not vend them in his borough-trade,
 But sailed for London-mart: the boy was ill,
 But ever humbled to his master's will;
 And on the river, where they smoothly sailed,
 He strove with terror and awhile prevailed;

145 But new to danger on the angry sea,
 He clung affrightened to his master's knee:
 The boat grew leaky and the wind was strong;
 Rough was the passage and the time was long;
 His liquor failed, and Peter's wrath arose, —
 No more is known — the rest we must suppose,

150 Or learn of Peter: — Peter says, he 'spied
 The stripling's danger and for harbour tried;
 Meantime the fish, and then th' apprentice died.'
 The pitying women raised a clamour round,
 And weeping said, 'Thou hast thy 'prentice drowned.'

155 Now the stern man was summoned to the hall,
 To tell his tale before the burghers all:
 He gave th' account; professed the lad he loved,
 And kept his brazen features all unmoved.

160 The mayor himself with tone severe replied, —
 'Henceforth with thee shall never boy abide;
 Hire thee a freeman, whom thou durst not beat,
 But who, in thy despite, will sleep and eat:
 Free thou art now! — again shouldst thou appear,
 Thou'lt find thy sentence, like thy soul, severe.'

165 Alas! for Peter not a helping hand,
 So was he hated, could he now command;
 Alone he rowed his boat, alone he cast
 His nets beside, or made his anchor fast;

170 To hold a rope or hear a curse was none, —
 He toiled and railed; he groaned and swore alone.
 Thus by himself compelled to live each day,
 To wait for certain hours the tide's delay;

175 At the same time the same dull views to see,
 The bounding marsh-bank and the blighted tree;
 The water only, when the tides were high,
 When low, the mud half-covered and half-dry;
 The sun-burnt tar that blisters on the planks,
 And bank-side stakes in their uneven ranks;
 Heaps of entangled weeds that slowly float,
 As the tide rolls by the impeded boat.

180 When tides were neap,[†] and, in the sultry day,
 Through the tall bounding mud-banks made their way,
 Which on each side rose swelling, and below
 The dark warm flood ran silently and slow;

185 There anchoring, Peter chose from man to hide,
 There hang his head, and view the lazy tide
 In its hot slimy channel slowly glide;
 Where the small eels that left the deeper way
 For the warm shore, within the shallows play;

190 Where gaping mussels, left upon the mud,
 Slope their slow passage to the fallen flood; —
 Here dull and hopeless he'd lie down and trace
 How sidelong crabs had scrawled their crooked race;
 Or sadly listen to the tuneless cry

195 Of fishing gull or clanging golden-eye;*
 What time the sea-birds to the marsh would come,
 And the loud bittern, from the bull-rush home,
 Gave from the salt-ditch side the bellowing boom:

200 He nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce,
 And loved to stop beside the opening sluice;
 Where the small stream, confined in narrow bound,
 Ran with a dull, unvaried, saddening sound;
 Where all, presented to the eye or ear,
 Oppressed the soul with misery, grief, and fear.

205 Besides these objects, there were places three,
 Which Peter seemed with certain dread to see;
 When he drew near them he would turn from each,
 And loudly whistle till he passed the reach.[†]

210 A change of scene to him brought no relief,
 In town, 'twas plain, men took him for a thief:

neap having least movement

reach stretch of river

sea-duck

The sailors' wives would stop him in the street,
 And say, 'Now, Peter, thou'st no boy to beat.'
 Infants at play, when they perceived him, ran,
 Warning each other – 'That's the wicked man.'
 He growled an oath, and in an angry tone
 Cursed the whole place and wished to be alone.
 Alone he was, the same dull scenes in view,
 And still more gloomy in his sight they grew:
 Though man he hated, yet employed alone
 At bootless labour, he would swear and groan,
 Cursing the shoals that glided by the spot,
 And gulls that caught them when his arts could not.
 Cold nervous tremblings shook his sturdy frame,
 And strange disease – he couldn't say the name;
 Wild were his dreams, and oft he rose in fright,
 Waked by his view of horrors in the night, –
 Horrors that would the sternest minds amaze,
 Horrors that demons might be proud to raise:
 And though he felt forsaken, grieved at heart,
 To think he lived from all mankind apart;
 Yet, if a man approached, in terrors he would start.
 A winter passed since Peter saw the town,
 And summer lodgers were again come down;
 These, idly curious, with their glasses spied
 The ships in bay as anchored for the tide, –
 The river's craft, – the bustle of the quay, –
 And sea-port views, which landmen love to see.
 One, up the river, had a man and boat
 Seen day by day, now anchored, now afloat;
 Fisher he seemed, yet used no net nor hook;
 Of sea-fowl swimming by no heed he took,
 But on the gliding waves still fixed his lazy look:
 At certain stations he would view the stream,
 As if he stood bewildered in a dream,
 Or that some power had chained him for a time,
 To feel a curse or meditate on crime.
 This known, some curious, some in pity went,
 And others questioned – 'Wretch, dost thou repent?'
 He heard, he trembled, and in fear resigned
 His boat: new terror filled his restless mind;
 Furious* he grew, and up the country ran,
 And there they seized him – a distempered man: –

mad

Him we received, and to a parish-bed,[†]
 Followed and cursed, the groaning man was led.
 Here when they saw him, whom they used to shun,
 A lost, lone man, so harassed and undone;
 Our gentle females, ever prompt to feel,
 Perceived compassion on their anger steal;
 His crimes they could not from their memories blot,
 But they were grieved, and trembled at his lot.
 A Priest too came, to whom his words are told;
 And all the signs they shuddered to behold.
 'Look! look!' they cried; 'his limbs with horror shake,
 And as he grinds his teeth, what noise they make!
 How glare his angry eyes, and yet he's not awake:
 See! what cold drops upon his forehead stand,
 And how he clenches that broad bony hand.'
 The Priest attending, found he spoke at times
 As one alluding to his fears and crimes;
 'It was the fall,' he muttered, 'I can show
 The manner how, – I never struck a blow: –
 And then aloud, – 'Unhand me, free my chain;
 On oath he fell – it struck him to the brain: –
 Why ask my father? – that old man will swear
 Against my life; besides, he wasn't there: –
 What, all agreed? – Am I to die[†] to-day? –
 My Lord, in mercy give me time to pray.'
 Then as they watched him, calmer he became,
 And grew so weak he couldn't move his frame,
 But murmuring spake – while they could see and hear
 The start of terror and the groan of fear;
 See the large dew-beads on his forehead rise,
 And the cold death-drop glaze his sunken eyes;
 Nor yet he died, but with unwonted force
 Seemed with some fancied being to discourse;
 He knew not us, or with accustomed art
 He hid the knowledge, yet exposed his heart;
 'Twas part confession and the rest defence,
 A madman's tale, with gleams of waking sense.
 'I'll tell you all,' he said, 'the very day
 When the old man first placed them in my way:
 My father's spirit – he who always tried
 To give me trouble, when he lived and died –
 When he was gone he could not be content

parish-bed in the workhouse

to die he imagines a death-sentence for murder

295 To see my days in painful labour spent,
 But would appoint his meetings, and he made
 Me watch at these, and so neglect my trade.
 "Twas one hot noon, all silent, still, serene,
 No living being had I lately seen;
 300 I paddled up and down and dipped my net,
 But (such his pleasure) I could nothing get, —
 A father's pleasure, when his toil was done,
 To plague and torture thus an only son!
 And so I sat and looked upon the stream,
 305 How it ran on, and felt as in a dream:
 But dream it was not: No! — I fixed my eyes
 On the mid stream and saw the spirits rise:
 I saw my father on the water stand,
 And hold a thin pale boy in either hand;
 310 And there they glided ghastly on the top
 Of the salt flood, and never touched a drop:
 I would have struck them, but they knew th' intent,
 And smiled upon the oar, and down they went.
 'Now, from that day, whenever I began
 315 To dip my net, there stood the hard old man —
 He and those boys: I humbled me and prayed
 They would be gone; — they heeded not, but stayed:
 Nor could I turn, nor would the boat go by,
 But, gazing on the spirits, there was I:
 320 They bade me leap to death, but I was loth to die:
 And every day, as sure as day arose,
 Would these three spirits meet me ere the close;
 To hear and mark them daily was my doom,
 And "Come," they said, with weak, sad voices, "come."
 325 To row away, with all my strength I tried,
 But there were they, hard by me in the tide,
 The three unbodied forms — and "Come," still "come," they cried.
 'Fathers should pity — but this old man shook
 His hoary locks, and froze me by a look:
 330 Thrice, when I struck them, through the water came
 A hollow groan, that weakened all my frame:
 "Father!" said I, "have mercy:" — he replied,
 I know not what — the angry spirit lied, —
 "Didst thou not draw thy knife?" said he: — 'Twas true,
 335 But I had pity and my arm withdrew:
 He cried for mercy, which I kindly gave,
 But he has no compassion in his grave.
 'There were three places, where they ever rose, —

The whole long river has not such as those —
 340 Places accursed, where, if a man remain,
 He'll see the things which strike him to the brain;
 And there they made me on my paddle lean,
 And look at them for hours; — accursed scene!
 When they would glide to that smooth eddy-space,[†]
 345 Then bid me leap and join them in the place;
 And at my groans each little villain sprite
 Enjoyed my pains and vanished in delight.
 'In one fierce summer-day, when my poor brain
 Was burning hot, and cruel was my pain,
 350 Then came this father-foe, and there he stood
 With his two boys again upon the flood:
 There was more mischief in their eyes, more glee,
 In their pale faces when they glared at me:
 Still did they force me on the oar to rest,
 355 And when they saw me fainting and and oppressed,
 He, with his hand, the old man, scooped the flood,
 And there came flame about him mixed with blood;
 He bade me stoop and look upon the place,
 Then flung the hot-red liquor in my face;
 360 Burning it blazed, and then I roared for pain,
 I thought the demons would have turned my brain.
 'Still there they stood, and forced me to behold
 A place of horrors — they can not be told —
 365 Where the flood opened, there I heard the shriek
 Of tortured guilt — no earthly tongue can speak:
 "All days alike! for ever!" did they say,
 "And unremitted torments every day" —
 Yes, so they said' — But here he ceased, and gazed
 On all around, affrightened and amazed;
 370 And still he tried to speak, and looked his dread
 Of frightened females gathering round his bed;
 Then dropped exhausted, and appeared at rest,
 Till the strong foe the vital powers possessed;
 Then with an inward, broken voice he cried,
 375 'Again they come,' and muttered as he died.

1810

eddy-space circular current

Robert Burns

1759–96

The son of a small farmer from Ayrshire, Burns spent much of his life trying to solve his financial problems by working the land, finally becoming an excise officer in 1789. As a youth, he was well aware of classic English poetry as well as the Scottish vernacular tradition of Ramsay and Fergusson, and in his own work the extent of dialect usage varies greatly. His first collection of *Poems*, which appeared at Kilmarnock in 1786, led to his lionisation by intellectual Edinburgh society, which chose to regard him inaccurately as a 'Heaven-taught ploughman'. (His unorthodox way of life and entanglements with women long-distorted views of his career as a whole.) Burns's interest in the native tradition led him to collect and write many poems for *The Scots Musical Museum*, such as 'O my luve's like a red, red rose'. An early supporter of the French Revolution, Burns has remained popular for his pleas for human equality and his celebration of humble worth. More solemn works like *The Cotter's Saturday Night* are complemented by comic narrative in *Tam o'Shanter* and vigorous satire of complacency in 'Holy Willie's Prayer'.

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER —†

And send the Godly in a pet to pray —

POPE.

O Thou that in the heavens does dwell!

Wha, as it pleases best thyself,
Sends ane to heaven and ten to h—ll,

A' for thy glory!

5 And no for ony gude or ill
They've done before thee. —

Holy Willie's Prayer The self-exposure of a stern Calvinist, 'gifted' — chosen to escape damnation. Burns's friend Hamilton was

defended by Aiken against the illiberal 'Willie' and Auld

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
When thousands thou has left in night,
That I am here before thy sight,

10 For gifts and grace,
A burning and a shining light
To a' this place. —

What was I, or my generation,†
That I should get such exaltation?

15 I, wha deserv'd most just damnation,
For broken laws
Sax thousand years ere my creation,
Thro' Adam's cause!

When from my mother's womb I fell,
Thou might hae plunged me deep in hell,
To gnash my gooms, and weep, and wail,
In burning lakes,
Where damned devils roar and yell
Chain'd to their stakes. —

25 Yet I am here, a chosen sample,
To shew thy grace is great and ample:
I'm here, a pillar o' thy temple

30 Strong as a rock,
A guide, a ruler and example
To a' thy flock. —

[O L—d thou kens what zeal I bear,
When drinkers drink, and swearers swear,
And singin' there, and dancin' here,

35 Wi' great an' sma';
For I am keepet by thy fear,
Free frae them a' .—]

But yet — O L—d — confess I must —
At times I'm fash'd* wi' fleshly lust;
And sometimes too, in worldly trust

40 Vile Self gets in;
But thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd wi' sin. —

troubled

generation birth, by which he inherited the original sin of Adam

O L—d — yestreen — thou kens — wi' Meg —
Thy pardon I sincerely beg!

- 45 O may 't ne'er be a living plague,
To my dishonor!
And I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg
Again upon her. —

- Besides, I farther maun avow,
50 Wi' Leezie's lass, three times — I trow —
But L—d, that friday I was fou*
When I cam near her;
O else, thou kens, thy servant true
Wad never steer* her. —

- 55 Maybe thou lets this fleshy thorn
Buffer thy servant e'en and morn,
Lest he o'er proud and high should turn,
That he's sae gifted;
If sae, thy hand maun e'en be borne
Untill thou lift it. —

- L—d bless thy Chosen in this place,
For here thou has a chosen race:
But G—d, confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
65 Wha bring thy rulers to disgrace
And open shame. —

L—d mind Gaun Hamilton's deserts!
He drinks, and swears, and plays at cartes,
Yet has sae mony taking arts

- 70 Wi' Great and Sma',
Frae G—d's ain priest the people's hearts
He steals awa. —

And when we chasten'd him therefore,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore,*
And set the warld in a roar

- 75 O' laughin at us:
Curse thou his basket and his store,
Kail* and potatoes. —

drunk

rouse

frolic

cabbage

- 80 L—d hear my earnest cry and prayer
Against that Presbytry[†] of Ayr!
Thy strong right hand, L—d, make it bare
Upon their heads!
L—d visit them, and dinna spare,
For their misdeeds!

- 85 O L—d my G—d, that glib-tongu'd Aiken!
My very heart and flesh are quaking
To think how I sat, sweating, shaking,
And p—ss'd wi' dread,
While Auld wi' hingin lip gaed sneaking
And hid his head!

- L—d, in thy day o' vengeance try him!
L—d visit him that did employ him!
And pass not in thy mercy by them,
Nor hear their prayer;
95 But for thy people's sake destroy them,
And dinna spare!

- But L—d, remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temporal and divine!
That I for grace and gear[†] may shine,
Excell'd by nane!
100 And a' the glory shall be thine!
AMEN! AMEN!

1785 1789

TO A LOUSE, ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH

- HA! whare ye gaun, ye crowlan ferlie![†]
Your impudence protects you sairly:
I canna say but ye strunt* rarely,
Owre gauze and lace;
5 Tho' faith, I fear ye dine but sparely,
On sic a place.

swagger

Presbytry the local church authorities,
insufficiently punitive

gear worldly possessions
crowlan ferlie creeping marvel

That ilka melder,[†] wi' the miller,
 Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
 That every naig was ca'd a shoe on,
 The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
 That at the L—d's house, even on Sunday,
 Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
 She prophesied that late or soon,
 Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;
 Or catch'd wi' warlocks* in the mirk,*
 By *Alloway's* auld haunted kirk.

witches dark

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,[†]
 To think how many counsels sweet,
 How many lengthen'd sage advices,
 The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae market-night,
Tam had got planted unco right;
 Fast by an ingle,* bleezing finely,
 Wi' reaming swats,[†] that drank divinely;

fire

cobble

And at his elbow, Souter* *Johnny*,
 His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;
 They had been fou for weeks thegither.
 The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter;
 And ay the ale was growing better:
 The landlady and *Tam* grew gracious,
 Wi' favours, secret, sweet, and precious:
 The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
 The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
 The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
 E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy:
 As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
 The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
 Kings may be blest, but *Tam* was glorious,
 O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
 You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;

ilka melder each meal-grinding
 gars me greet makes me weep

reaming swats foaming new beer

Or like the snow falls in the river,
 A moment white — then melts for ever;
 Or like the borealis race,[†]
 That flit ere you can point their place;
 Or like the rainbow's lovely form
 Evanishing amid the storm. —
 Nae man can tether time or tide;
 The hour approaches *Tam* maun ride;
 That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
 That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
 And sic a night he takes the road in,
 As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

65

70

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
 The rattling showers rose on the blast;
 The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
 Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:
 That night, a child might understand,
 The Deil had business on his hand.

75

Weel mounted on his gray mare, *Meg*,
 A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit* on thro' dub* and mire,
 Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
 Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet;
 Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;

rushed puddle

Whiles glowing round wi' prudent cares,
 Lest bogles catch him unawares:
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
 Whare ghaists and houlets* nightly cry. —

owls

By this time he was cross the ford,
 Whare, in the snaw, the chapman smoor'd;[†]
 And past the birks* and meikle* stane,
 Whare drunken *Charlie* brak's neck-bane;
 And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
 Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
 And near the thorn, aboon* the well,
 Whare *Mungo's* mither hang'd hersel. —
 Before him *Doon* pours all his floods;
 The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;

birches large

above

borealis race 'northern lights' in sky smoor'd was smothered

100 The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll:
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;
And loud resounded mirth and dancing. —

105 Inspiring bold *John Barleycorn*!
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny, † we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae, * we'll face the devill! —
The swats sae ream'd in *Tammie*'s noddle, *
Fair play, † he car'd na deils a boddle. †
But *Maggie* stood right sair astonish'd,
Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventured forward on the light;
And, vow! *Tam* saw an unco sight!

115 Warlocks and witches in a dance;
Nae cotillion brent * new frae *France*,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock-bunker † in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
A towzie tyke, † black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge:

125 Till roof and rafters a' did dirl * —
Coffins stood round, like open presses, *
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantraip slight †
Each in its cauld hand held a light. —
By which heroic *Tam* was able

130 To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet aims; *
Twa span-lang, † wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae a rape, *
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' blude red-rusted;
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;

tippenny twopenny ale
Fair play to be fair
boddle sixth of a penny
winnock-bunker window-seat
touzie tyke shaggy dog
gart them skirl made them shriek
cantraip slight magic skill
span-lang hand-span sized

140 A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft;
Wi' mair o' horrible and awefu',
Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

145 As *Tammie* glow'rd, amaz'd, and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:
The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit, †
Till ilka carlin * swat and reekit,
And coost † her duddies to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark! †

155 Now, *Tam*, O *Tam*! had thae been queans, *
A' plump and strapping in their teens,
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie * flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder † linnen!
Their breeks † o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies, *
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies! *

160 But wither'd beldams, † auld and droll,
Rigwoodie * hags wad spean * a foal,
Lowping † and flinging on a crummock, †
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

165 But *Tam* kend what was what fu' brawlie, *
There was ae winsome wench and wawlie,
That night enlisted in the core,
(Lang after kend on *Carrick* shore;
For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bony boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear, *
And kept the country-side in fear:)
Her cutty sark, † o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,

cleekit linked arms
coost ... *sark* threw off her clothes for the
business and skipped in her shift
seventeen hunder very fine
Thir breeks these trousers
beldams old women
Louping ... *crummock* crooked stick
cutty sark short shift, of Paisley linen

whisky
head

brand

shake
cupboards

irons
rope

witch

girls

greasy

buttocks
girls

coarse
wean

well

barley

175 It was her best, and she was vauntie.*
 Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
 That sark she coft* for her wee Nannie,
 Wi' twa pund Scots,† ('twas a' her riches),
 Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

180 But here my Muse her wing maun cour,*
 Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r;
 To sing how Nannie lap and flang,†
 (A souple jade she was, and strang),
 And how Tam stood, like ane bewitch'd,
 And thought his very een enrich'd;
 185 Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,†
 And hotch'd* and blew wi' might and main:
 Till first ae caper, syne* anither,
 Tam tint* his reason a' thegither,
 And roars out, 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!'
 190 And in an instant all was dark:
 And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
 When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,*
 When plundering herds* assail their byke,*
 195 As open pussie's* mortal foes,
 When, pop! she starts before their nose;
 As eager runs the market-crowd,
 When 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud;
 So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
 200 Wi' mony an eldritch* skreech and hollow.

Ah, Tam! Ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin!*
 In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
 In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!
 Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
 205 Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
 And win the key-stane of the brig*;
 There at them thou thy tail may toss,
 A running stream they dare na cross.
 But ere the key-stane she could make,
 210 The fient a† tail she had to shake!
 For Nannie, far before the rest,

twa pund Scots several shillings sterling
lap and flang leaped and flung herself
fidg'd fu' fain twitched eagerly
The fient a the devil a; none

Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
 And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle*;
 215 But little wist she Maggie's mettle —
 Ae spring brought off her master hale,
 But left behind her ain gray tail:
 The carlin clautht* her by the rump,
 And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
 220 Ilk man and mother's son, take heed:
 When'er to drink you are inclin'd,
 Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,
 Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear,
 Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

1790 1791

SONG. AE FOND KISS

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
 Ae fareweel, and then for ever!
 Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
 Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee. —

5 Who shall say that Fortune grieves him,
 While the star of hope she leaves him:
 Me, nae chearful twinkle lights me;
 Dark despair around benights me. —

10 I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
 Naething could resist my Nancy:
 But to see her, was to love her;
 Love but her, and love for ever. —

15 Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
 Had we never lov'd sae blindly!
 Never met — or never parted,
 We had ne'er been broken-hearted. —

proud

bought

fold

jerked
then
lostfuss
hive
hare
herdsmen

unearthly

deserts

bridge

Fare-thee-weel, thou first and fairest!
 Fare-thee-weel, thou best and dearest!
 Thine be ilka joy and treasure,
 20 Peace, Enjoyment, Love and Pleasure! —

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
 Ae fareweel, Alas, for ever!
 Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
 Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee. —

1791

1792

SONG. A RED RED ROSE

O my Luvè's like a red, red rose,
 That 's newly sprung in June;
 O my Luvè's like the melody
 That 's sweetly play'd in tune. —

5 As fair art thou, my bonie lass,
 So deep in luvè am I;
 And I will love thee still, my Dear,
 Till a' the seas gang dry. —

10 Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear,
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
 I will love thee still, my Dear,
 While the sands o' life shall run. —

15 And fare thee weel, my only Luvè!
 And fare thee weel, a while!
 And I will come again, my Luvè,
 Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

1794

SONG. FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT —

Is there, for honest Poverty
 That hings his head, and a' that;
 The coward-slave, we pass him by,
 We dare be poor for a' that!
 5 For a' that, and a' that,
 Our toils obscure, and a' that,
 The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
 The Man 's the gowd* for a' that. —

gold

10 What though on hamely fare we dine,
 Wear hoddin' grey, and a' that.
 Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
 A Man 's a Man for a' that.

15 For a' that, and a' that,
 Their tinsel show, and a' that;
 The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
 Is king o' men for a' that. —

20 Ye see yon birkie[†] ca'd, a lord,
 Wha struts, and stares, and a' that,
 Though hundreds worship at his word,
 He's but a coof* for a' that.

fool

For a' that, and a' that,
 His ribband, star and a' that,
 The man of independent mind,
 He looks and laughs at a' that. —

25 A prince can mak a belted knight,
 A marquis, duke, and a' that;
 But an honest man's aboon his might,
 Gude faith he mauna fa' that!

30 For a' that, and a' that,
 Their dignities, and a' that,
 The pith o' Sense, and pride o' Worth,
 Are higher rank than a' that. —

Then let us pray that come it may,
 As come it will for a' that,

hoddin' coarse cloth
birkie lively man, with the trappings of high
 rank (l.22)

mauna fa' must not claim

- 35 That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth
 Shall bear the gree,^t and a' that.
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Its comin yet for a' that,
 That Man to Man the world o'er,
 Shall brothers be for a' that. —

40

1795

William Beckford

1760–1844

A wealthy exotic, MP, and son of a Lord Mayor of London, Beckford spent two of his several periods on the Continent after sexual scandals (the second homosexual). On his return, he spent a fortune on his Gothic mansion, Fonthill Abbey in Wiltshire, whose huge octagonal tower collapsed shortly after its sale in 1822 for £300,000. His tower at the top of Lansdown Road, Bath, still stands. His travel books are overshadowed by *Vathek* (1786), written in French, and translated by Samuel Henley. This oriental tale relates the Caliph's quest for knowledge and sensual experience through acts of barbarism described with a deadpan wit, which finally gives way to a horrific exposure of the price of forbidden knowledge. Here, Vathek's mother Carathis prepares in the tower a sacrifice to the supernatural powers of the cruel Giaour. Morakanabad is his prime vizir, Bababalouk his chief eunuch.

From VATHEK

[*Sacrifice to the Giaour*]

By secret stairs, contrived within the thickness of the wall, and known only to herself and her son, she first repaired to the mysterious recesses in which were deposited the mummies that had been wrested from the catacombs of the ancient Pharaohs. Of these she ordered several to be taken. From thence, she resorted to a gallery; where, under the guard of fifty female negroes mute and blind of the right eye, were preserved the oil of the most venomous serpents; rhinoceros' horns; and woods of a subtle and penetrating odour, procured from the interior of the Indies, together with a thousand other horrible rarities. This collection had been formed for a purpose like the present, by Carathis herself; from a presentiment, that she might one day enjoy some intercourse with the infernal powers: to whom she had ever been passionately attached, and to whose taste she was no stranger.

To familiarise herself the better with the horrors in view, the Princess remained in the company of her negroes, who squinted in the most amiable manner from the only eye they had; and leered with exquisite

delight, at the skulls and skeletons which Carathis had drawn forth from her cabinets; all of them making the most frightful contortions and uttering such shrill chatterings, that the Princess, stunned by them and suffocated by the potency of the exhalations, was forced to quit the gallery, after stripping it of a part of its abominable treasures.

Whilst she was thus occupied, the Caliph, who instead of the visions he expected, had acquired in these unsubstantial regions a voracious appetite, was greatly provoked at the mutes. For having totally forgotten their deafness, he had impatiently asked them for food; and seeing them regardless of his demand, he began to cuff, pinch, and bite them, till Carathis arrived to terminate a scene so indecent, to the great content of these miserable creatures: 'Son! what means all this?' said she, panting for breath. 'I thought I heard as I came up, the shrieks of a thousand bats, torn from their crannies in the recesses of a cavern; and it was the outcry only of these poor mutes, whom you were so unmercifully abusing. In truth, you but ill deserve the admirable provision I have brought you.' — 'Give it me instantly,' exclaimed the Caliph; 'I am perishing for hunger!' — 'As to that,' answered she, 'you must have an excellent stomach if it can digest what I have brought.' — 'Be quick,' replied the Caliph; — 'but oh heavens! what horrors! what do you intend?' 'Come; come,' returned Carathis, 'be not so squeamish; but help me to arrange every thing properly; and you shall see that what you reject with such symptoms of disgust will soon complete your felicity. Let us get ready the pile, for the sacrifice of tonight; and think not of eating, till that is performed: know you not, that all solemn rites ought to be preceded by a rigorous abstinence?'

The Caliph, not daring to object, abandoned himself to grief and the wind that ravaged his entrails, whilst his mother went forward with the requisite operations. Phials of serpents' oil, mummies, and bones, were soon set in order on the balustrade of the tower. The pile began to rise; and in three hours was twenty cubits high. At length darkness approached, and Carathis, having stripped herself to her inmost garment, clapped her hands in an impulse of ecstasy; the mutes followed her example; but Vathek, extenuated¹ with hunger and impatience, was unable to support himself, and fell down in a swoon. The sparks had already kindled the dry wood; the venomous oil burst into a thousand blue flames; the mummies, dissolving, emitted a thick dun vapour; and the rhinoceros' horns, beginning to consume; all together diffused such a stench, that the Caliph, recovering, started from his trance, and gazed wildly on the scene in full blaze around him. The oil gushed forth in a plenitude of streams; and the negresses, who supplied it without intermission, united their cries to those of the Princess. At last, the fire

extenuated weakened

became so violent, and the flames reflected from the polished marble so dazzling, that the Caliph, unable to withstand the heat and the blaze, effected his escape; and took shelter under the imperial standard.

In the meantime, the inhabitants of Samarah, scared at the light which shone over the city, arose in haste; ascended their roofs; beheld the tower on fire, and hurried, half-naked to the square. Their love for their sovereign immediately awoke; and, apprehending him in danger of perishing in his tower, their whole thoughts were occupied with the remains of his safety. Morakanabad flew from his retirement, wiped away his tears, and cried out for water like the rest. Bababalouk, whose olfactory nerves were more familiarised to magical odours, readily conjecturing, that Carathis was engaged in her favourite amusements, strenuously exhorted them not to be alarmed. Him, however, they treated as an old poltroon, and styled him a rascally traitor. The camels and dromedaries were advancing with water; but, no one knew by which way to enter the tower. Whilst the populace was obstinate in forcing the doors, a violent north-east wind drove an immense volume of flame against them. At first, they recoiled, but soon came back with redoubled zeal. At the same time, the stench of the horns and mummies increasing, most of the crowd fell backward in a state of suffocation. Those that kept their feet mutually wondered at the cause of the smell; and admonished each other to retire. Morakanabad, more sick than the rest, remained in a piteous condition. Holding his nose with one hand, every one persisted in his efforts with the other to burst open the doors and obtain admission. A hundred and forty of the strongest and most resolute, at length accomplished their purpose. Having gained the staircase, by their violent exertions, they attained a great height in a quarter of an hour.

Carathis, alarmed at the signs of her mutes, advanced to the staircase; went down a few steps, and heard several voices calling out from below: 'You shall, in a moment have water!' Being rather alert, considering her age, she presently regained the top of the tower; and bade her son suspend the sacrifice for some minutes; adding, — 'We shall soon be enabled to render it more grateful. Certain dolts of your subjects, imagining no doubt that we were on fire, have been rash enough to break through those doors, which had hitherto remained inviolate; for the sake of bringing up water. They are very kind, you must allow, so soon to forget the wrongs you have done them; but that is of little moment. Let us offer them to the Giaour — let them come up; our mutes, who neither want strength nor experience, will soon dispatch them; exhausted as they are, with fatigue.' — 'Be it so,' answered the Caliph, 'provided we finish, and I dine.' In fact, these good people, out of breath from ascending fifteen hundred stairs in such haste; and chagrined, at having spilt, by the way, the water they had taken, were

no sooner arrived at the top, than the blaze of the flames, and the fumes
 of the mummies, at once overpowered their senses. It was a pity! for
 they beheld not the agreeable smile, with which the mutes and negresses
 adjusted the cord to their necks: these amiable personages rejoiced,
 however, no less at the scene. Never before had the ceremony of
 strangling been performed with so much facility. They all fell, without
 the least resistance or struggle: so that Vathek, in the space of a few
 moments, found himself surrounded by the dead bodies of the most
 faithful of his subjects; all which were thrown on the top of the pile.
 Carathis, whose presence of mind never forsook her, perceiving that
 she had carcasses sufficient to complete her oblation,[†] commanded the
 chains to be stretched across the staircase, and the iron doors barricaded,
 that no more might come up.

No sooner were these orders obeyed, than the tower shook; the dead
 bodies vanished in the flames; which, at once, changed from a swarthy
 crimson, to a bright rose colour: an ambient vapour emitted the most
 exquisite fragrance; the marble columns rang with harmonious sounds,
 and the liquified horns diffused a delicious perfume. Carathis, in
 transports, anticipated the success of her enterprise; whilst her mutes
 and negresses, to whom these sweets had given the cholic, retired
 grumbling to their cells.

Scarcely were they gone, when, instead of the pile, horns, mummies
 and ashes, the Caliph both saw and felt, with a degree of pleasure
 which he could not express, a table, covered with the most magnificent
 repast: flaggons of wine, and vases of exquisite sherbet reposing on
 snow. He availed himself, without scruple, of such an entertainment;
 and had already laid hands on a lamb stuffed with pistachios, whilst
 Carathis was privately drawing from a filigree urn, a parchment that
 seemed to be endless; and which had escaped the notice of her son.

Totally occupied in gratifying an importunate appetite, he left her to
 peruse it without interruption; which having finished, she said to him,
 in an authoritative tone, 'Put an end to your gluttony, and hear the
 splendid promises with which you are favoured!' She then read, as
 follows: 'Vathek, my well-beloved, thou hast surpassed my hopes: my
 nostrils have been regaled by the savour of thy mummies, thy horns;
 and, still more by the lives, devoted on the pile. At the full of the moon,
 cause the bands of thy musicians, and thy tymbals,[†] to be heard; depart
 from thy palace, surrounded by all the pageants of majesty; thy most
 faithful slaves, thy best beloved wives; thy most magnificent litters; thy
 richest laden camels; and set forward on thy way to Istakhar.[†] There,
 I await thy coming: that is the region of wonders: there shalt thou

oblation offering
 tymbals tambourines

Istakhar ruined capital of Persia

receive the diadem of Gian Ben Gian; the talismans[†] of Soliman; and
 the treasures of the pre-adamite sultans: there shalt thou be solaced
 with all kinds of delight. – But, beware how thou enterest any dwelling
 on thy route; or thou shalt feel the effects of my anger.'

The Caliph, notwithstanding his habitual luxury, had never before
 dined with so much satisfaction. He gave full scope to the joy of these
 golden tidings; and betook himself to drinking anew. Carathis, whose
 antipathy to wine was by no means insuperable, failed not to pledge
 him at every bumper he ironically[†] quaffed to the health of Mahomet.
 This infernal liquor completed their impious temerity, and prompted
 them to utter a profusion of blasphemies. They gave a loose to their
 wit, at the expense of the ass of Balaam, the dog of the seven sleepers,
 and the other animals admitted into the paradise of Mahomet. In this
 sprightly humour, they descended the fifteen hundred stairs. . . .

1786

talismans objects controlling supernatural ironically Muslims are forbidden alcohol
 powers

Matthew Gregory Lewis

1775–1818

By the age of twenty-one, Lewis had attended Oxford, visited Weimar and met Goethe, been attached to Britain's embassy in Holland, written *The Monk* (publ. 1796), and become an MP. He knew Scott and, later, Byron and Shelley. His dramas and other tales of terror were overshadowed by his most notorious essay in the 'gothic' novel, which he censored after attacks by Coleridge and others. *The Monk* relates the moral disintegration of a Spanish cleric, who in ignorance rapes his sister and murders her and his mother, and is finally destroyed in his pride by Lucifer.

From THE MONK[†]

[*The Invocation of Lucifer*]

She had quitted her religious habit: she was now clothed in a long sable robe, on which was traced in gold embroidery a variety of unknown characters: it was fastened by a girdle of precious stones, in which was fixed a poignard. Her neck and arms were uncovered. In her hand she bore a golden wand. Her hair was loose and flowed wildly upon her shoulders; her eyes sparkled with terrific expression; and her whole demeanour was calculated to inspire the beholder with awe and admiration.

'Follow me!' she said to the Monk in a low and solemn voice; 'all is ready!'

His limbs trembled, while he obeyed her. She led him through various narrow passages; and on every side as they passed along, the beams of the lamp displayed none but the most revolting objects: skulls, bones, graves, and images whose eyes seemed to glare on them with horror and surprise. At length they reached a spacious cavern, whose lofty roof the eye sought in vain to discover. A profound obscurity hovered through the void. Damp vapours struck cold to the Friar's heart; and

[†]*The Monk* The protagonist, Ambrosio, has been seduced from his vows by Matilda, disguised as a novice monk. To further his

lust for Antonia, who will turn out to be his sister, Matilda invokes demonic powers in the sepulchre

he listened sadly to the blast, while it howled along the lonely vaults. Here Matilda stopped. She turned to Ambrosio. His cheeks and lips were pale with apprehension. By a glance of mingled scorn and anger she reproved his pusillanimity, but she spoke not. She placed the lamp upon the ground, near the basket. She motioned that Ambrosio should be silent, and began the mysterious rites. She drew a circle round him, another round herself, and then taking a small phial from the basket, poured a few drops upon the ground before her. She bent over the place, muttered some indistinct sentences, and immediately a pale sulphurous flame arose from the ground. It increased by degrees, and at length spread its waves over the whole surface, the circles alone excepted in which stood Matilda and the Monk. It then ascended the huge columns of unhewn stone, glided along the roof, and formed the cavern into an immense chamber totally covered with blue trembling fire. It emitted no heat: on the contrary, the extreme chillness of the place seemed to augment with every moment. Matilda continued her incantations: at intervals she took various articles from the basket, the nature and name of most of which were unknown to the Friar: but among the few which he distinguished, he particularly observed three human fingers, and an *Agnus Dei*[†] which she broke in pieces. She threw them all into the flames which burned before her, and they were instantly consumed.

The Monk beheld her with anxious curiosity. Suddenly she uttered a loud and piercing shriek. She appeared to be seized with an access of delirium; she tore her hair, beat her bosom, used the most frantic gestures, and drawing the poignard from her girdle plunged it into her left arm. The blood gushed out plentifully, and as she stood on the brink of the circle, she took care that it should fall on the outside. The flames retired from the spot on which the blood was pouring. A volume of dark clouds rose slowly from the ensanguined earth, and ascended gradually, till it reached the vault of the cavern. At the same time a clap of thunder was heard: the echo pealed fearfully along the subterraneous passages, and the ground shook beneath the feet of the enchantress.

It was now that Ambrosio repented of his rashness. The solemn singularity of the charm had prepared him for something strange and horrible. He waited with fear for the Spirit's appearance, whose coming was announced by thunder and earthquakes. He looked wildly round him, expecting that some dreadful apparition would meet his eyes, the sight of which would drive him mad. A cold shivering seized his body, and he sank upon one knee, unable to support himself.

'He comes!' exclaimed Matilda in a joyful accent.

Agnus Dei image of the Lamb of God

60 Ambrosio started, and expected the Dæmon with terror. What was his surprise, when the thunder ceasing to roll, a full strain of melodious music sounded in the air. At the same time the cloud dispersed, and he beheld a figure more beautiful, than fancy's pencil ever drew. It was a youth seemingly scarce eighteen, the perfection of whose form and face was unrivalled. He was perfectly naked: a bright star sparkled upon his forehead; two crimson wings extended themselves from his shoulders; and his silken locks were confined by a band of many-coloured fires, which played round his head, formed themselves into a variety of figures, and shone with a brilliance far surpassing that of precious stones. Circlets of diamonds were fastened round his arms and ankles, and in his right hand he bore a silver branch, imitating myrtle. His form shone with dazzling glory: he was surrounded by clouds of rose-coloured light, and at the moment that he appeared, a refreshing air breathed perfumes through the cavern. Enchanted at a vision so contrary to his expectations, Ambrosio gazed upon the Spirit with delight and wonder: yet however beautiful the figure, he could not but remark a wildness in the Dæmon's eyes, and a mysterious melancholy impressed upon his features, betraying the Fallen Angel, and inspiring the spectators with secret awe.

80 The music ceased. Matilda addressed herself to the Spirit: she spoke in a language unintelligible to the Monk, and was answered in the same. She seemed to insist upon something, which the Dæmon was unwilling to grant. He frequently darted upon Ambrosio angry glances, and at such times the Friar's heart sank within him. Matilda appeared to grow incensed. She spoke in a loud and commanding tone, and her gestures declared, that she was threatening him with her vengeance. Her menaces had the desired effect: the Spirit sank upon his knee, and with a submissive air presented to her the branch of myrtle. No sooner had she received it, than the music was again heard; a thick cloud spread itself over the apparition; the blue flames disappeared, and total obscurity reigned through the cave. The Abbot moved not from his place: his faculties were all bound up in pleasure, anxiety, and surprise. At length the darkness dispersing, he perceived Matilda standing near him in her religious habit, with the myrtle in her hand. No traces of the incantation, and the vaults were only illuminated by the faint rays of the sepulchral lamp.

95 'I have succeeded,' said Matilda, 'though with more difficulty than I expected. Lucifer, whom I summoned to my assistance, was at first unwilling to obey my commands: to enforce his compliance I was constrained to have recourse to my strongest charms. They have produced the desired effect, but I have engaged never more to invoke his agency in your favour. Beware then, how you employ an opportunity which never will return. My magic arts will now be of no use to you:

105 in future you can only hope for supernatural aid, by invoking the Dæmons yourself, and accepting the conditions of their service. This you will never do: you want strength of mind to force them to obedience, and unless you pay their established price, they will not be your voluntary servants. In this one instance they consent to obey you: I offer you the means of enjoying your mistress, and be careful not to lose the opportunity. Receive this constellated myrtle: while you bear this in your hand, every door will fly open to you. It will procure you access tomorrow night to Antonia's chamber: then breathe upon it thrice, pronounce her name, and place it upon her pillow. A death-like slumber will immediately seize upon her, and deprive her of the power of resisting your attempts. Sleep will hold her till break of morning. In this state you may satisfy your desires without danger of being discovered; since when day-light shall dispel the effects of the enchantment, Antonia will perceive her dishonour, but be ignorant of the ravisher. Be happy then, my Ambrosio, and let this service convince you, that my friendship is disinterested and pure. The night must be near expiring: let us return to the Abbey, lest our absence should create surprise.'

The Abbot received the talisman with silent gratitude. His ideas were too much bewildered by the adventures of the night, to permit his expressing his thanks audibly, or indeed as yet to feel the whole value of her present. Matilda took up her lamp and basket, and guided her companion from the mysterious cavern. . . .

[In the same sepulchre, unknown to the cavalier Lorenzo, his sister, a nun, has been imprisoned by her Prioress for the disgrace of her baby, now dead. Lorenzo sees a spark of light]

[The Prisoner in the Sepulchre]

It proceeded from a small lamp which was placed upon an heap of stones, and whose faint and melancholy rays served rather to point out, than dispel the horrors of a narrow gloomy dungeon formed in one side of the cavern; it also showed several other recesses of similar construction, but whose depth was buried in obscurity. Coldly played the light upon the damp walls, whose dew-stained surface gave back a feeble reflection. A thick and pestilential fog clouded the height of the vaulted dungeon. As Lorenzo advanced, he felt a piercing chilliness spread itself through his veins. The frequent groans still engaged him to move forwards. He turned towards them, and by the lamp's glimmering beams beheld in a corner of this loathsome abode, a creature stretched upon a bed of straw, so wretched, so emaciated, so pale, that he doubted to think her woman. She was half-naked: her long dishevelled

unfeeling; and 'tis they who bid me repent; and 'tis they, who threaten me with eternal perdition! Saviour, Saviour! You think not so!

She again fixed her eyes upon the crucifix, took her rosary, and while she told her beads, the quick motion of her lips declared her to be praying with fervency.

While he listened to her melancholy accents, Lorenzo's sensibility became yet more violently affected. The first sight of such misery had given a sensible shock to his feelings: but that being past, he now advanced towards the captive. She heard his steps, and uttering a cry of joy, dropped the rosary.

'Hark! Hark! Hark!' She cried: 'Some one comes!'

She strove to raise herself, but her strength was unequal to the attempt: she fell back, and as she sank again upon the bed of straw, Lorenzo heard the rattling of heavy chains. He still approached, while the prisoner thus continued.

'Is it you, Camilla? You are come then at last? Oh! it was time! I thought that you had forsaken me; that I was doomed to perish of hunger. Give me to drink, Camilla, for pity's sake! I am faint with long fasting, and grown so weak that I cannot raise myself from the ground. Good Camilla, give me to drink, lest I expire before you!'

Fearing that surprise in her enfeebled state might be fatal, Lorenzo was at a loss how to address her.

'It is not Camilla,' said he at length, speaking in a slow and gentle voice.

'Who is it then?' replied the sufferer: 'Alix, perhaps, or Violante. My eyes are grown so dim and feeble, that I cannot distinguish your features. But whichever it is, if your breast is sensible of the least compassion, if you are not more cruel than wolves and tigers, take pity on my sufferings. You know, that I am dying for want of sustenance. This is the third day, since these lips have received nourishment. Do you bring me food? Or come you only to announce my death, and learn how long I have yet to exist in agony?'

'You mistake my business,' replied Lorenzo; 'I am no emissary of the cruel Prioreess. I pity your sorrows, and come hither to relieve them.'

'To relieve them?' repeated the captive; 'Said you, to relieve them?' At the same time starting from the ground, and supporting herself upon her hands, She gazed upon the stranger earnestly.

'Great God! It is no illusion! A man! Speak! Who are you? What brings you hither? Come you to save me, to restore me to liberty, to life and light? Oh! speak, speak quickly, lest I encourage an hope whose disappointment will destroy me.'

'Be calm!' replied Lorenzo in a voice soothing and compassionate; 'The Domina of whose cruelty you complain, has already paid the forfeit of her offences: You have nothing more to fear from her. A few

hair fell in disorder over her face, and almost entirely concealed it. One wasted arm hung listlessly upon a tattered rug, which covered her convulsed and shivering limbs: the other was wrapped round a small bundle, and held it closely to her bosom. A large rosary lay near her: opposite to her was a crucifix, on which she bent her sunk eyes fixedly, and by her side stood a basket and a small earthen pitcher.

Lorenzo stopped: he was petrified with horror. He gazed upon the miserable object with disgust and pity. He trembled at the spectacle; he grew sick at heart: his strength failed him, and his limbs were unable to support his weight. He was obliged to lean against the low wall which was near him, unable to go forward, or to address the sufferer. She cast her eyes towards the staircase: The wall concealed Lorenzo, and she observed him not.

'No one comes!' she at length murmured.

As she spoke, her voice was hollow, and rattled in her throat: she sighed bitterly.

'No one comes!' she repeated; 'No! They have forgotten me! They will come no more!'

She paused for a moment: then continued mournfully.

'Two days! Two long, long days, and yet no food! And yet no hope, no comfort! Foolish woman! How can I wish to lengthen a life so wretched! Yet such a death! O! God! To perish by such a death! To linger out such ages in torture! Till now, I knew not what it was to hunger! Hark! No. No one comes! They will come no more!'

She was silent. She shivered, and drew the rug over her naked shoulders.

'I am very cold! I am still unused to the damps of this dungeon! 'Tis strange: but no matter. Colder shall I soon be, and yet not feel it - I shall be cold, cold as thou art!'

She looked at the bundle, which lay upon her breast. She bent over it, and kissed it: then drew back hastily, and shuddered with disgust.

'It was once so sweet! It would have been so lovely, so like him! I have lost it for ever! How a few days have changed it! I should not know it again myself! Yet it is dear to me! God! how dear! I will forget what it is: I will only remember what it was, and love it as well, as when it was so sweet! so lovely! so like him! I thought, that I had wept away all my tears, but here is one still lingering.'

She wiped her eyes with a tress of her hair. She put out her hand for the pitcher, and reached it with difficulty. She cast into it a look of hopeless enquiry. She sighed, and replaced it upon the ground.

'Quite a void! Not a drop! Not one drop left to cool my scorched-up burning palate! Now would I give treasures for a draught of water! And they are God's servants, who make me suffer thus! They think themselves holy, while they torture me like fiends! They are cruel and

minutes will restore you to liberty, and the embraces of your friends from whom you have been secluded. You may rely upon my protection. Give me your hand, and be not fearful. Let me conduct you where you may receive those attentions which your feeble state requires.'

105 'Oh! Yes! Yes! Yes!' cried the prisoner with an exulting shriek; 'There is a God then, and a just one! Joy! Joy! I shall once more breathe the fresh air, and view the light of the glorious sunbeams! I will go with you! Stranger, I will go with you! Oh! Heaven will bless you for pitying an unfortunate! But this too must go with me,' She added pointing to the small bundle, which she still clasped to her bosom; 'I cannot part with this. I will bear it away: It shall convince the world, how dreadful are the abodes so falsely termed religious. Good stranger, lend me your hand to rise: I am faint with want, and sorrow, and sickness, and my forces have quite forsaken me! So, that is well!'

115 As Lorenzo stooped to raise her, the beams of the lamp struck full upon his face.

'Almighty God!' she exclaimed; 'It is possible! That look! those features! Oh! Yes, it is, it is. . . .'

120 She extended her arms to throw them round him; But her enfeebled frame was unable to sustain the emotions, which agitated her bosom. She fainted, and again sank upon the bed of straw. . . .

[The nun-mother tells of her imprisonment]

'Thus did I drag on a miserable existence. Far from growing familiar with my prison, I beheld it every moment with new horror. The cold seemed more piercing and bitter, the air more thick and pestilential. My frame became weak, feverish, and emaciated. I was unable to rise from the bed of straw, and exercise my limbs in the narrow limits, to which the length of my chain permitted me to move. Though exhausted, faint, and weary, I trembled to profit by the approach of sleep: my slumbers were constantly interrupted by some obnoxious insect crawling over me. Sometimes I felt the bloated toad, hideous and pampered with the poisonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging his loathsome length along my bosom: sometimes the quick cold lizard roused me leaving his slimy track upon my face, and entangling itself in the tresses of my wild and matted hair: often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms, which bred in the corrupted flesh of my infant. At such times I shrieked with terror and disgust, and while I shook off the reptile, trembled with all a woman's weakness. . . .'

1796

Jane Austen

1775-1817

Jane Austen's great period belongs to the nineteenth century; but in her early teens she was evidently an avid reader and critic of contemporary fiction, whose absurdities get short shrift in her juvenile writing. In 'Love and Friendship' (written by age 15), the teenage narrator Laura and her friend Sophia ('all Sensibility and Feeling') are staying with Sophia's cousin Macdonald, whose daughter Janettha they encourage to desert her suitor Graham and elope with Captain McKenzie. (The text is partly modernised.)

From LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

They had been gone nearly a couple of hours, before either Macdonald or Graham had entertained any suspicion of the affair -. And they might not even then have suspected it, but for the following little accident. Sophia happening one day to open a private drawer in Macdonald's library with one of her own keys, discovered that it was the place where he kept his papers of consequence & amongst them some bank notes of considerable amount. This discovery she imparted to me; and having agreed together that it would be a proper treatment of so vile a wretch as Macdonald to deprive him of money, perhaps dishonestly gained, it was determined that the next time we should either of us happen to go that way, we would take one or more of the bank notes from the drawer. This well-meant plan we had often successfully put in execution; but alas! on the very day of Janettha's escape, as Sophia was majestically removing the 5th bank-note from the drawer to her own purse, she was suddenly most impertinently interrupted in her employment by the entrance of Macdonald himself, in a most abrupt & precipitate manner. Sophia (who though naturally all winning sweetness could when occasions demanded it call forth the dignity of her sex) instantly put on a most forbidding look, & darting an angry frown on the undaunted culprit, demanded in a haughty tone of voice 'Wherefore her retirement was thus insolently broken in on?' The unblushing Macdonald, without even endeavouring to exculpate

himself from the crime he was charged with, meanly endeavoured to reproach Sophia with ignobly defrauding him of his money. The dignity of Sophia was wounded; 'Wretch (exclaimed she, hastily replacing the bank-note in the drawer) how darest thou to accuse me of an act, of which the bare idea makes me blush?' The base wretch was still unconvinced & continued to upbraid the justly-offended Sophia in such opprobrious language, that at length he so greatly provoked the gentle sweetness of her nature, as to induce her to revenge herself on him by informing him of Janetta's elopement, and of the active part we had both taken in the affair. At this period of their quarrel I entered the library and was as you may imagine equally offended as Sophia at the ill-grounded accusations of the malevolent and contemptible Macdonald.

'Base Miscreant (cried I) how canst thou thus undauntedly endeavour to sully the spotless reputation of such bright excellence? Why dost thou not suspect my innocence as soon?' 'Be satisfied Madam (replied he) I do suspect it, & therefore must desire that you will both leave this house in less than half an hour.'

'We shall go willingly; (answered Sophia) our hearts have long detested thee, & nothing but our friendship for thy daughter could have induced us to remain so long beneath thy roof.'

'Our friendship for my Daughter has indeed been most powerfully exerted by throwing her into the arms of an unprincipled Fortune-hunter.' (replied he)

'Yes, (exclaimed I) amidst every misfortune, it will afford us some consolation to reflect that by this one act of friendship to Janetta, we have amply discharged every obligation that we have received from her father.'

'It must indeed be a most gratefull reflection, to your exalted minds.' (said he.)

As soon as we had packed up our wardrobe & valuables, we left Macdonald Hall, & after having walked about a mile & a half we sate down by the side of a clear limpid stream to refresh our exhausted limbs. The place was suited to meditation. — A grove of full-grown elms sheltered us from the East —. A bed of full-grown nettles from the West —. Before us ran the murmuring brook & behind us ran the turnpike road. We were in a mood for contemplation & in a disposition to enjoy so beautiful a spot. A mutual silence which had for some time reigned between us, was at length broke by my exclaiming — 'What a lovely scene! Alas why are not Edward & Augustus here to enjoy its beauties with us?'

'Ah! my beloved Laura (cried Sophia) for pity's sake forbear recalling to my remembrance the unhappy situation of my imprisoned Husband. Alas, what would I not give to learn the fate of my Augustus! to know

if he is still in Newgate,[†] or if he is yet hung. But never shall I be able so far to conquer my tender sensibility as to enquire after him. Oh! do not I beseech you ever let me again hear you repeat his beloved name —. It affects me too deeply —. I cannot bear to hear him mentioned, it wounds my feelings.'

'Excuse me my Sophia for having thus unwillingly offended you —' replied I — and then changing the conversation, desired her to admire the noble grandeur of the elms which sheltered us from the Eastern Zephyr. 'Alas! my Laura (returned she) avoid so melancholy a subject, I intreat you. — Do not again wound my sensibility by observations on those elms. They remind me of Augustus —. He was like them, tall, majestic — he possessed that noble grandeur which you admire in them.'

I was silent, fearfull lest I might any more unwillingly distress her by fixing on any other subject of conversation which might again remind her of Augustus.

'Why do you not speak my Laura?' (said she after a short pause) 'I cannot support this silence — you must not leave me to my own reflections; they ever recur to Augustus.'

'What a beautiful sky! (said I) How charmingly is the azure varied by those delicate streaks of white!'

'Oh! my Laura (replied she hastily withdrawing her eyes from a momentary glance at the sky) do not thus distress me by calling my attention to an object which so cruelly reminds me of my Augustus's blue satten waistcoat striped with white! In pity to your unhappy friend avoid a subject so distressing.' What could I do? The feelings of Sophia were at that time so exquisite, & the tenderness she felt for Augustus so poignant that I had not the power to start any other topic, justly fearing that it might in some unforeseen manner again awaken all her sensibility by directing her thoughts to her Husband. — Yet to be silent would be cruel; She had intreated me to talk.

From this dilemma I was most fortunately relieved by an accident truly apropos; it was the lucky overturning of a gentleman's phaeton,[†] on the road which ran murmuring behind us. It was a most fortunate accident as it diverted the attention of Sophia from the melancholy reflections which she had been before indulging. We instantly quitted our seats & ran to the rescue of those who but a few moments before had been in so elevated a situation as a fashionably high phaeton, but who were now laid low and sprawling in the dust —. 'What an ample subject for reflection on the uncertain enjoyments of this world, would not that phaeton & the life of Cardinal Wolsey afford a thinking mind!' said I to Sophia as we were hastening to the field of action.

Newgate prison — Augustus has stolen his father's money Phaeton light carriage

110 She had not time to answer me for every thought was now engaged
by the horrid spectacle before us. Two gentlemen most elegantly attired
but weltering in their blood was what first struck our eyes – we
approached – they were Edward & Augustus – Yes dearest Marianne
they were our husbands. Sophia shrieked & fainted on the ground – I
screamed and instantly ran mad –. We remained thus mutually deprived
of our senses some minutes, & on regaining them were deprived of
them again –. For an hour & a quarter did we continue in this
115 unfortunate situation – Sophia fainting every moment & I running mad
as often. At length a groan from the hapless Edward (who alone retained
any share of life) restored us to ourselves –. Had we indeed before
imagined that either of them lived, we should have been more sparing
of our grief – but as we had supposed when we first beheld them that
they were no more, we knew that nothing could remain to be done but
what we were about –. No sooner therefore did we hear my Edward's
groan than postponing our lamentations for the present, we hastily ran
to the dear Youth and kneeling on each side of him implored him not
to die –. 'Laura (said he fixing his now languid eyes on me) I fear I have
125 been overturned.'

I was overjoyed to find him yet sensible –.

'Oh! tell me Edward (said I) tell me I beseech you before you die,
what has befallen you since that unhappy day in which Augustus was
arrested & we were separated –'

130 'I will' (said he) and instantly fetching a deep sigh, expired –. Sophia
immediately sunk again into a swoon –. My grief was more audible,
my voice faltered, my eyes assumed a vacant stare, my face became as
pale as death, and my senses were considerably impaired –.

'Talk not to me of phaetons (said I, raving in a frantic, incoherent
manner) – Give me a violin –. I'll play to him & sooth him in his
135 melancholy hours – Beware ye gentle nymphs of Cupid's thunderbolts,
avoid the piercing shafts of Jupiter – look at that grove of firs – I see a
leg of mutton – they told me Edward was not dead; but they deceived
me – they took him for a cucumber –' Thus I continued wildly exclaiming
on my Edward's death –. For two hours did I rave thus madly and
140 should not then have left off, as I was not in the least fatigued, had not
Sophia who was just recovered from her swoon, intreated me to consider
that night was now approaching and that the damps began to fall. 'And
whither shall we go (said I) to shelter us from either?' 'To that white
cottage.' (replied she pointing to a neat building which rose up amidst
the grove of elms & which I had not before observed –) I agreed & we
instantly walked to it – we knocked at the door – it was opened by an
old woman; on being requested to afford us a night's lodging, she
informed us that her house was but small, that she had only two bed-
145 rooms, but that however we should be welcome to one of them. We

were satisfied & followed the good woman into the house where we
were greatly cheered by the sight of a comfortable fire –. She was a
widow & had only one daughter, who was then just seventeen – one
of the best of ages; but alas! she was very plain & her name was
155 Bridget. . . . Nothing therefore could be expected from her—she could
not be supposed to possess either exalted ideas, delicate feelings or
refined sensibilities – She was nothing more than a mere good-tempered,
civil & obliging young woman; as such we could scarcely dislike her –
she was only an object of contempt –.

1790

1922

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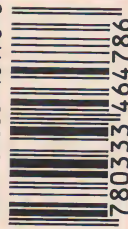
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